DELL

the fabulous NELSONS' fabulous kid:

RICKY

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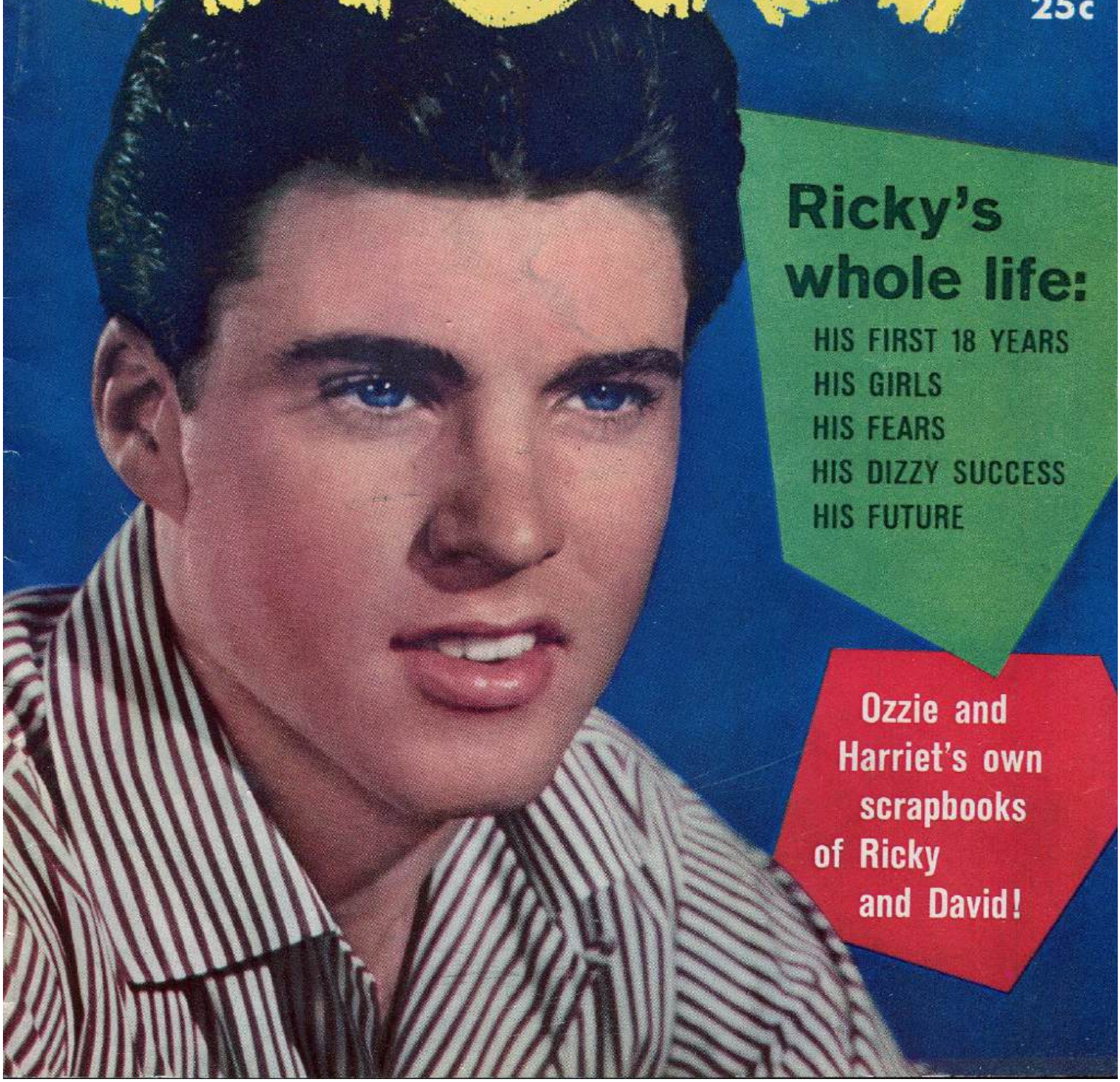

Ricky's whole life:

HIS FIRST 18 YEARS
HIS GIRLS
HIS FEARS
HIS DIZZY SUCCESS
HIS FUTURE

Ozzie and Harriet's own scrapbooks of Ricky and David!

When the picture on the opposite page was taken, all eyes were on Ricky Nelson—but only because he was the youngest—and maybe the cutest—of the Nelsons.

Today he's still the youngest, and a lot of girls maintain he's still the cutest—but Rick Nelson is a great deal more besides. Actor, song-writer, singing star, idol of some 1200 fan clubs, he's one of the most popular and talented kids in Hollywood history. How did he get that way, where is he going, who is he going to be—these are the questions a million kids are asking—and this is the book with the answers. This is Rick Nelson's story in words and in pictures—pictures from Ozzie and Harriet's family scrapbook, pictures from Rick's tours and movies, pictures of the girls he dates, the home he lives in, the life he leads. We've uncovered his hopes and his fears, his loves and his disappointments—even his probable future. Here it all is for the first time: the full, complete, never-before-told story of

RICKY

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CALL ME RICK!

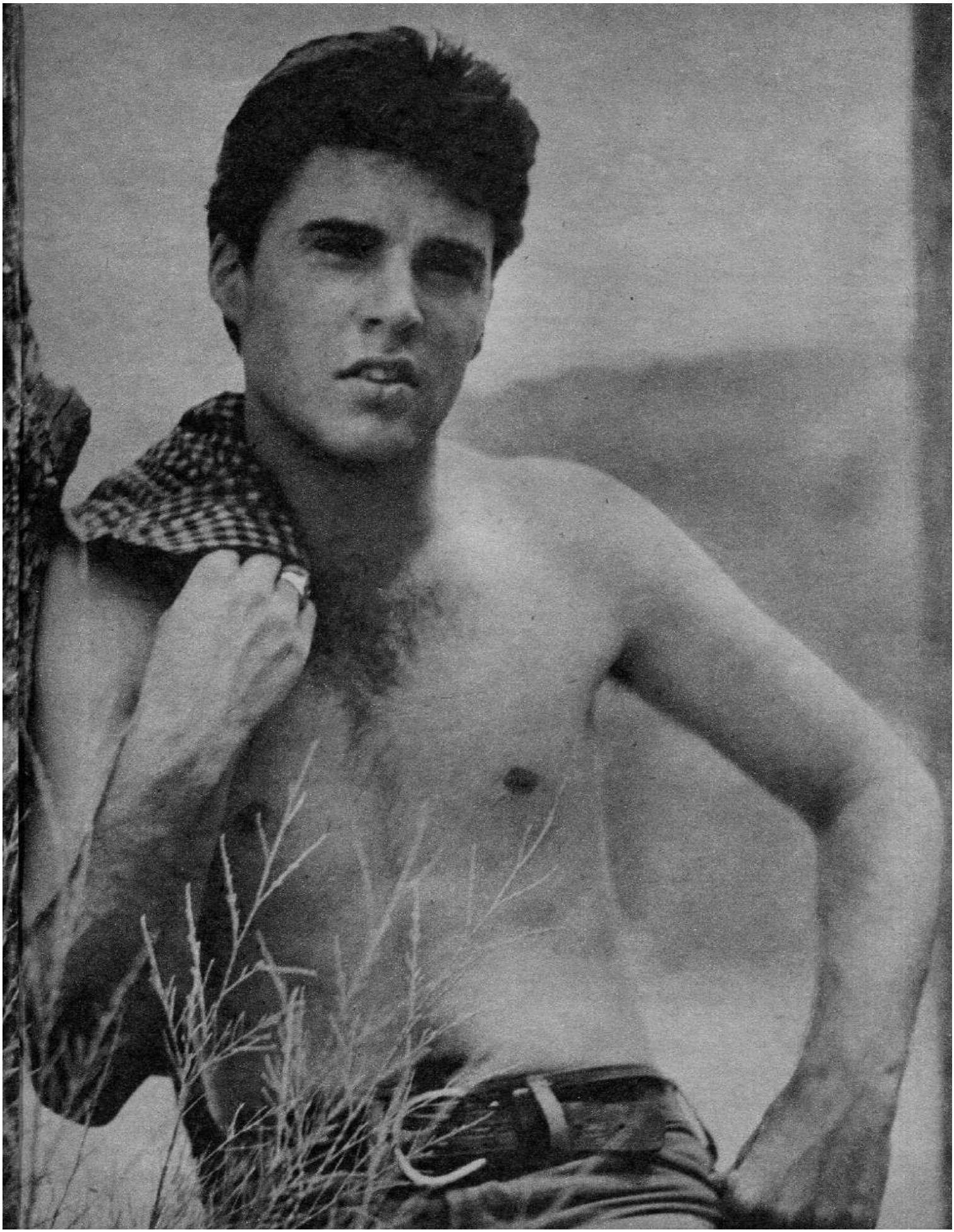
■ His real name is Eric Hilliard Nelson, but nobody ever called him that. He was "Ozzie's youngest," or "Dave's kid brother," or—mostly—"Ricky". Today, a lot of things have changed. He's eighteen years old, which makes him eligible for the draft (though Uncle Sam hasn't taken official notice yet). He's six feet tall—which makes Dave, an inch shorter, *his* little brother. And he's worth somewhere between a quarter and a half million dollars in cool, cool cash. That makes him a rich man, even by Ozzie's standards.

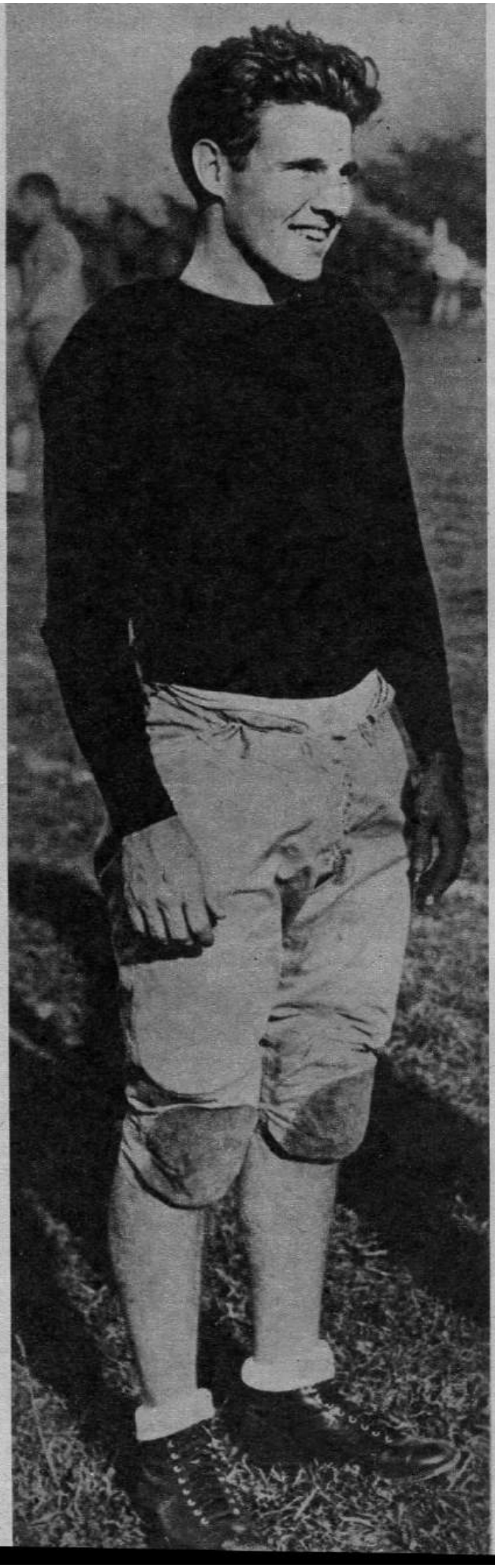
What does all that add up to? It adds up to a boy who's starting to stand up like a man, and wants to be called "Rick", to make sure everybody knows it. It adds up to a young man who's still capable of acting like a boy, of turning moody, of smashing up a car and almost killing himself, of dreaming of women impossible to attain—and going steady with five possible ones all at the same time. It adds up to a teen-agers' idol who has three million girls wildly in love with him—but who got a "no soap" from his parents when he wanted to get engaged—and had to obey orders, too.

It adds up to a kid whose very first recording earned him a gold disc in record time and is on its way to an unprecedented second one—but a kid who has recurrent nightmares of failure. "I never used to dream much," Rick explains, "but lately I have one dream over and over. I'm up on a stage somewhere singing to a live audience, and the song I'm singing is something like, 'I Want A Girl'. Not that there's anything wrong with the song—it's a great old tune—but it's just not the kind of song I like to sing. I keep on singing it and at the same time I'm getting madder and madder that I can't do the kind of song that suits me more . . ." A pretty scarey dream for a boy who claims he likes nothing better than a thousand upturned female faces, watching him go into his act. It's important because it shows that even a kid who wants a man's name for doing a man's job—and is certainly entitled to have it—sees that the future isn't necessarily all sunshine—that there may be storms ahead as well.

Some of these storms have already started rumbling in the distance. There are rumors that Rick doesn't get along with Papa Ozzie as well as he used to—and there's a good question as to whose fault that may be. If it's true, it could mean not only a personal and professional tragedy for the Nelson family—whose life is their show and whose show is their life—but a major disaster for Rick, who adores his folks and isn't sure he's ready to be on his own.

There have been other stories about him—about his driving too fast, living too hard, even—most shocking of all—hints that he's too careless in loving 'em and leaving 'em. None of these stories is necessarily true; there are more people who claim Rick is the country's nicest young guy than there are to call him (as one magazine did recently) "Hollywood's most dangerous teen-ager." For sure, he's one of the most fascinating kids ever to hit show business—from inside or outside. This book is the story of Rick Nelson as he is today and as he used to be—wonderful and dangerous, shy and wild. It's the story of the family he lives with, fights with, and loves, and how he grew up, solved some of his problems and found new ones, fell in love, became a star—in short, it's the story of "Ricky" becoming "Rick". We think it's a wonderful story because it's about a wonderful guy. We only hope—as you surely do—that the unwritten chapters of his future do justice to him and to his fabulous, wonderful clan!





the first adventure of Ozzie and Harriet

papa met mama

■ Papa came out of Jersey City as the youngest Eagle Scout in the country; he was just thirteen and it was a long time before he met Mama. Mama was still in Kansas City, Missouri, going to public school.

As a teen-ager Papa was something of a dazzler. By the time he'd enrolled at Rutgers University he had all the makings of a college hero, and he made it. He was a star quarterback, a boxing and swimming champ, a flashy tennis player, a cartoonist for the college humor magazine. Along with all that he had wavy hair and a toothpaste smile. The law, for which he studied and got a degree, couldn't hold him.

Mama was a blonde-haired, blue-eyed baby. When she was six weeks old she was carried on-stage in a touring company production of *The Heir To The Hoorah*. Her father, the late Roy E. Hilliard, was a well known director. Her mother had been an actress for 25 years. There was no messing around concerning Harriet's future: it was show business. In 1929 she went to New York to study ballet, but it was dancing to a beat that took her to the Palace Theatre where she shared the bill with such as Bert Lahr and Ken Murray . . .

By this time Ozzie had formed his own band and had become known as a crooner. That wouldn't have been bad except that Rudy Vallee had become known as a crooner and nobody could match his nasal delivery. Ozzie thought it would be a great idea to find a sweet young thing and sing to her up there on the bandstand. He got this idea in 1932 when it was not yet a universal custom for girls to sing with bands. It had to be a special kind of girl. In Ozzie's words, "She had to be very attractive and yet young, fresh and untheatrical looking, so as to be a more glamorous counterpart of the college-and-debutante crowd that we played to."

It was very hard to find that kind of girl. They either sang good and looked awful or sang awful and looked good. Ozzie had a problem until the night he went to a place on Broadway called the Hollywood Cafe with a friend—the late cartoonist Ham Fisher.

This girl came out to sing and dance and introduce the other acts. She was young, beautiful, warm,

poised, charming. Said Ozzie to Ham: *"That's* a girl!"

"That is a girl," said Ham to Ozzie, "who lives with her mother and doesn't talk to strangers."

"But I have a wonderful idea for her," said Ozzie.

"She has heard that idea—many times," said Ham, "and doesn't think it's so wonderful."

When Ozzie persuaded Ham of his honorable intentions, Ham agreed to deliver the message to Harriet whom, fortunately, he knew. And Harriet agreed to have lunch with Ozzie at Sardi's.

By the time Ozzie had offered her the job—at half the salary she was earning—his charm had got across, because she didn't tell him to get lost, she told him she'd think it over.

All the way home to Englewood, New Jersey, where his mother lived, Ozzie wished he'd offered her more. At one in the morning he'd had it and went to sleep. At 3:30 in the morning he thought he heard a fire alarm; it was only the telephone. Harriet had just thought it over—she and her mother and all their friends. They'd decided the job was unusual. But that wasn't what had won her. What had won her was the fact that he'd been an Eagle Scout. It meant he had character.

It only took a little while before Ozzie's band was playing and both of them were singing at all the big hotels and for all the leading college proms in the country. Then they were singing on radio (for sponsors) and on tour and in the Cocoanut Grove.

In Hollywood, a movie executive saw Harriet and asked her to make a movie. Ozzie said okay. At this point she consulted him about everything because he was about to become her husband.

They were married October 8, 1935, and three days later Harriet was at work in *Follow The Fleet*, with Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire. Ginger saw the rushes, told Harriet to prepare herself for stardom. Harriet was delighted, but she had a better idea . . .

By the time Harriet was making movies, Ozzie (opposite page) was past his Rutgers football days, had become a band leader, Harriet's husband and boss —and was preparing for fatherhood! (Pictures on these and following 6 pages from Ozzie and Harriet's own scrapbook.)

Today Both Ozzie and Harriet look years younger than their ages, can match their sons in energy and ability to have fun, enjoy unexpected situations.

Like David, Ricky (the little boy at right) was born on the road—but by then, Nelsons' home base was California.

then along came the

"be-bop babies"

■ David was born on October 24, 1936. He took to the road (on which the Nelsons toured) with ease. Partly because Harriet bought a shiny black town car that had leather upholstery and three rows of seats, It cost $7,000.

"If I'd had any sense at all I would have closed our joint bank account right then and there," Ozzie recalls. "But I'm a kind-hearted soul—and besides, there was nothing left to close. At least she didn't bring any more mad things into the family—unless, of course, you want to count Ricky. And believe me, you have to count Ricky . . ."

Ricky arrived on May 8, 1940. The Nelsons stopped touring and moved to Hollywood. Harriet didn't retire; she just took a deep breath and established a model American family in the most unlikely town in the world.

Ricky followed David around like a shadow, but he always had an impish personality all his own. His favorite outfit was a pair of blue jeans that had lost its knees, a t-shirt of David's whose neckline circled his chest and a leather jacket (also David's) that made him look like a starving refugee. Once he insisted on accompanying Harriet to Farmer's Market in this regalia. It didn't cramp his style; he struck up conversations with everyone and when he got home turned down an offer of fifty cents to throw at least the jeans away.

"One dollar," Harriet said. "That's my last offer."

"A buck? You bet!" he said—and stripped.

By the age of six, he was singing and playing a sort of amorphic "be-bop" on the piano, to his—and Dave's—great delight.

Ricky was the spark that lit up the house. "Boy, I could write a book," Ozzie used to tell his friends. "Sure, sure," they said. In 1944 Ozzie had something better than a book; he had a radio show called "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet."

At two, Ricky was shy, Dave had already begun to remind people of Harriet in his happy disposition.

But it was easy enough to get a smile out of Ricky. Show him a car, a plane—anything that moved.

On Christmas Eve, Ozzie read to sons. "We're like any other family," he said, worked hard to make it true.

"Can you do it, Rick?" Dave's lines would read. Rick's mouth would set. "Sure. I don't mess around, boy!" He became known to entire country for that phrase. But at studio he did "mess around," sneaked out for candy bars.

the "I don't mess around" boy

■ David used to wear a sweater with the letter Ozzie had won at Rutgers sewn on it—and Ricky used to wear himself out keeping up with him. For a while he tagged after David's friends and played football with them (although it would have taken two of him to make one of them). After he suffered a few minor injuries, Ozzie and Harriet hinted that he might be too light for the team, but he wouldn't buy that. "It's just—I'm accident-prone," he said.

It was just things like that which were adapted for radio and the public's delight. Their house was one of the few in Hollywood, Harriet used to boast, that had a bannister running the full length of the stairs. (In true Dagwood style Ozzie slid down it one morning on his way to work, and nearly cracked his skull on the opposite wall. "This house isn't built right!" he muttered, "that front door is out of line.") They also had a dog—or was it a horse—named Nick who, instead of guarding the house at night, would trot off and sleep at a neighbor's. The daily occurrences that were somehow always hilarious provided all the material the Nelsons could use.

From the beginning Harriet was a mother in the traditional style. She liked to knit, cook, sew, and had a passion for interior decorating. But her outlook was always modern—there were three athletes in the family and "to belong" she become a fourth. There were also rules in the family (she and Ozzie made them) having to do with allowances and chores and curfew hours. Any time a problem came up it was met with discussion and a democratic vote. "What if it winds up a tie?" someone asked her. "Then we talk some more," she said.

The boys hardly knew that they were being immortalized (by Henry Blair and Tommy Bernard) on a radio show; they hardly realized that their parents were celebrities. Once, when they were traveling by train, Harriet ran into Bill Boyd and his wife and was greeted like a long-lost friend. Ricky was astonished. "Gee, Mom," he gasped. "I never thought *you* knew Hopalong Cassidy!"

David spoke for both of them when he said, "Nothing much unusual happened to me as a kid. I never felt I was anything special. My folks came home every night and we were together as much as any kids and parents are. . . . I used to listen to the show every week. The boy who played Ricky was really funny. He was supposed to be four, but he

had a deep bass voice! When I was twelve and Rick was still real small we stepped in and took over the roles of ourselves. It was fun, but nothing unusual."

Ricky was so small that they had to sit him on a special table so that he could reach the mike. During his debut Harriet started hearing unexpected laughs from the studio audience. Ricky had taken off his shoes (on the theory that if he couldn't see his feet no one could) and was wiggling his toes.

Ricky always had a quick mind. He knew his lines perfectly at radio time, but during rehearsals they could never find him. He was off somewhere playing the drums or unloading his allowance at the candy machine.

When the show moved to television the boys moved with it, but even this increased notoriety didn't affect them. One afternoon David, who was attending Hollywood High School, asked his mother for permission to take a part-time job.

"All the other kids at school have jobs and earn extra money," he said. "Why can't I?"

"David," his mother said. "You already have a job."

David's confusion was easily understood. The job was so much like his life at home he thought it was a normal part of life itself. Even Harriet got confused. Once she heard Ozzie talking to her and ran upstairs to answer him. In their room, he was playing a tape recording of the show.

When Ricky was twelve he left Bancroft Junior High to be tutored. It was convenient that way. He'd be through with schoolwork by noon, then go over to Bancroft's playground to see his old friends. From there he'd bicycle to Hollywood High (which he later entered as a sophomore) to watch sports practice.

"He is very well coordinated for a little guy," his big brother said then; "he'll make a good all-around athlete."

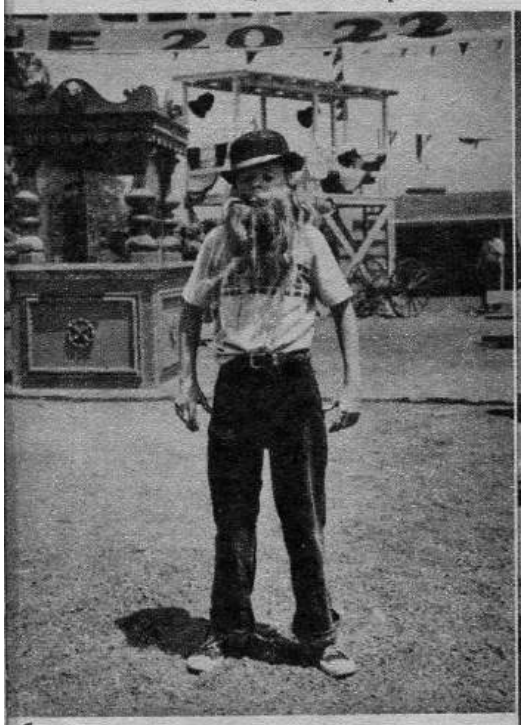
Dave knew what he was talking about. At the age of eleven Ricky was runner-up (in his age group) at the Pacific Southwest Tennis Tournament. He was later to excel in gymnastics, baseball, football and track.

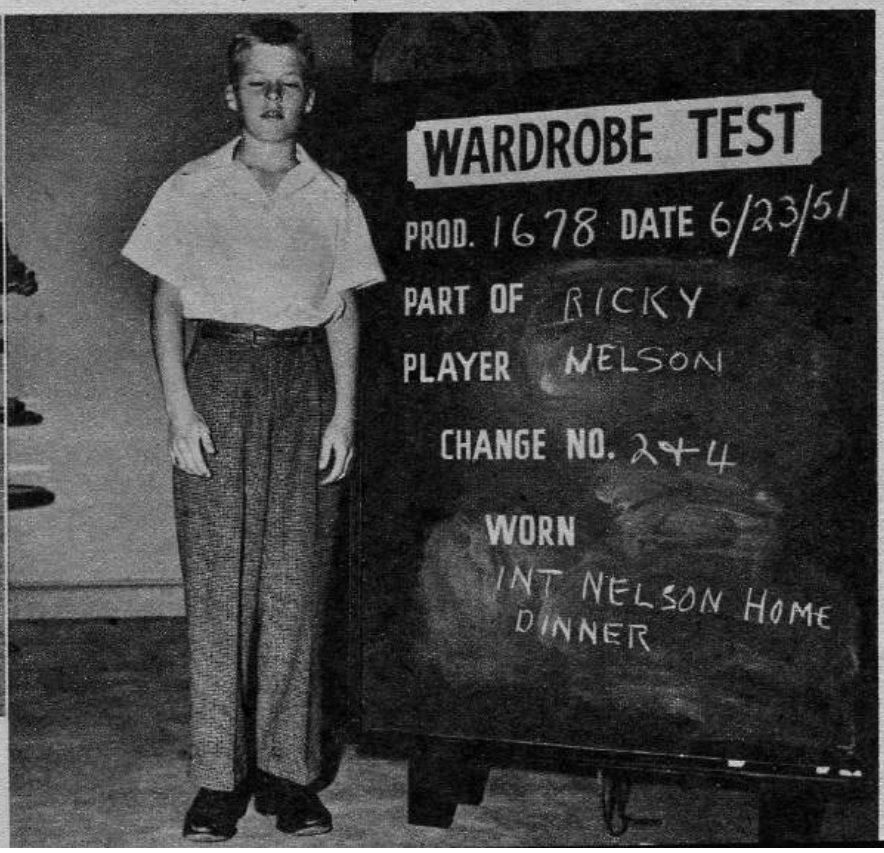
By the time he was fifteen Ricky had won—three times in a row—the annual Gold Star award as "the top child star in the field of entertainment."

The only thing about Ricky that changed as he reached his middle teens was that he could eat like an army, and suddenly he was six feet tall . . .

became a child star...

He was the same while making "Here Come The Nelsons," his first movie, delighted in stealing beards from make-up to wear all over the lot. Then 11, he was a favorite "mascot" on the movie lot.



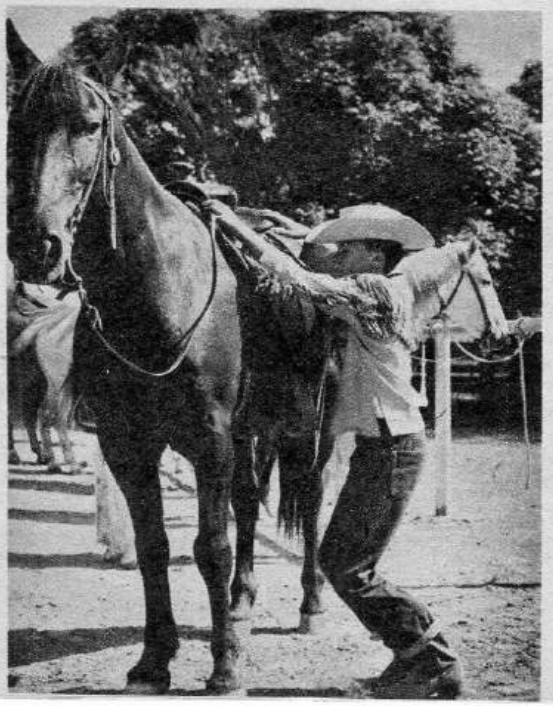


he was a child star . . .

but he had to get used to "WAITIN' IN SCHOOL"

Rick got plenty of help and encouragement in his school work from Harriet, who is tremendously proud of Ozzie's college degree.

As in everything else, Rick and Dave led normal school lives, dyed eggs for Easter, lived for the 3 o'clock bell. Rick (right) would take off for the nearest horse.



At home the boys learned manners; Rick astonished one of Dave's first dates with a display of polished courtesy!

Rick was a picky eater. "He'd turn down steak," Harriet recalls, "for cookies and a hamburger!"

Tennis was his great love. Here, he's with top prep team. (Rick's on left. 2nd row from bottom.)

On Father's Day, boys served their dad his breakfast in bed.

■ One morning when Ricky was nine years old, he stood up to Pop and gave him an argument. "Why do I have to go to school?" he said. "I'll probably always be a radio actor, and I can read well enough for that right now."

He could read fine, but he couldn't add so good. To school he went, child star or not. In high school his best subjects were English and speech; his worst was math. His grades were generally average.

Evenings he and Dave would turn on the TV set. Then Harriet would come in and inquire how their homework was coming along. That was enough to end the evening's entertainment.

They had a swimming pool in the backyard and a hundred friends—always welcome. Harriet was the kind of parent who'd get all dressed up when her kids gave a party and then disappear discreetly after saying hello to their guests. She'd disappear, that is, as far as upstairs—where they could call her if they needed more hamburgers.

"We have very few set rules at our house," Rick has said recently. "Our parents like us to use our own judgment." But, he added, if they abused the privilege, their folks wouldn't take it lying down. . .

he was waitin' in school

and wonderin' about college

Unable to go to school on a regular basis, both Rick and David have had tutoring from teacher Reginald Van Scoyk.

■ The first time Rick announced his feelings about school was the first time, says Dave, "that we heard Pop's 'Need For An Education' speech."

"Show business," Ozzie told them, "should always be considered a means to an end. A spot in the limelight is not only a temporary thing most of the time, but it is also no guarantee of happiness."

Dave enrolled at USC. Then he decided he wanted to be an actor and needed more time to concentrate on it. Ozzie didn't see things Dave's way. So Dave cut all his classes and flunked out. "When I woke up and realized what I'd done," he says, "I tried to make up for it. I went to night school and summer school. The following semester at junior college I made a B-plus average and was able to get back into USC."

Ozzie was happy, but Dave wasn't. He was offered a role in *Peyton Place*—and that, plus the family show, plus college was quite a load. This time Ozzie realized something new. "Our kids do a man's job and a boy's job, too," he said. "Harriet and I talked it over and asked ourselves if maybe we didn't want David to go to college so we could point with pride at that fact. We tried to be introspective about the problem and we finally decided Dave was right."

But everybody's dreams die hard—and Ozzie wants Rick to at least try college before *he* decides to give it up. Rick can't work up much enthusiasm about it.

"I was fairly interested in my school work," he said, before summer vacation. "But I wouldn't be truthful if I said I attacked it each day with great vigor and enthusiasm. After all, show business is pretty interesting and sometimes plain school work seems a little pallid by comparison. I realize, however, that a certain amount of educational background is necessary."

A grade B average was necessary before Ozzie and Harriet gave Rick a Porsche car. An agreement to study with a private tutor after graduating high school was necessary before Ozzie would agree that Rick needn't enroll in college—just now. But rumor has it that Ozzie has "secretly" enrolled Rick in UCLA after all.

Will he go? Who knows? Rick doesn't need college to get famous or to make money. He never was a scholar, so knowledge for its own sake doesn't send him.

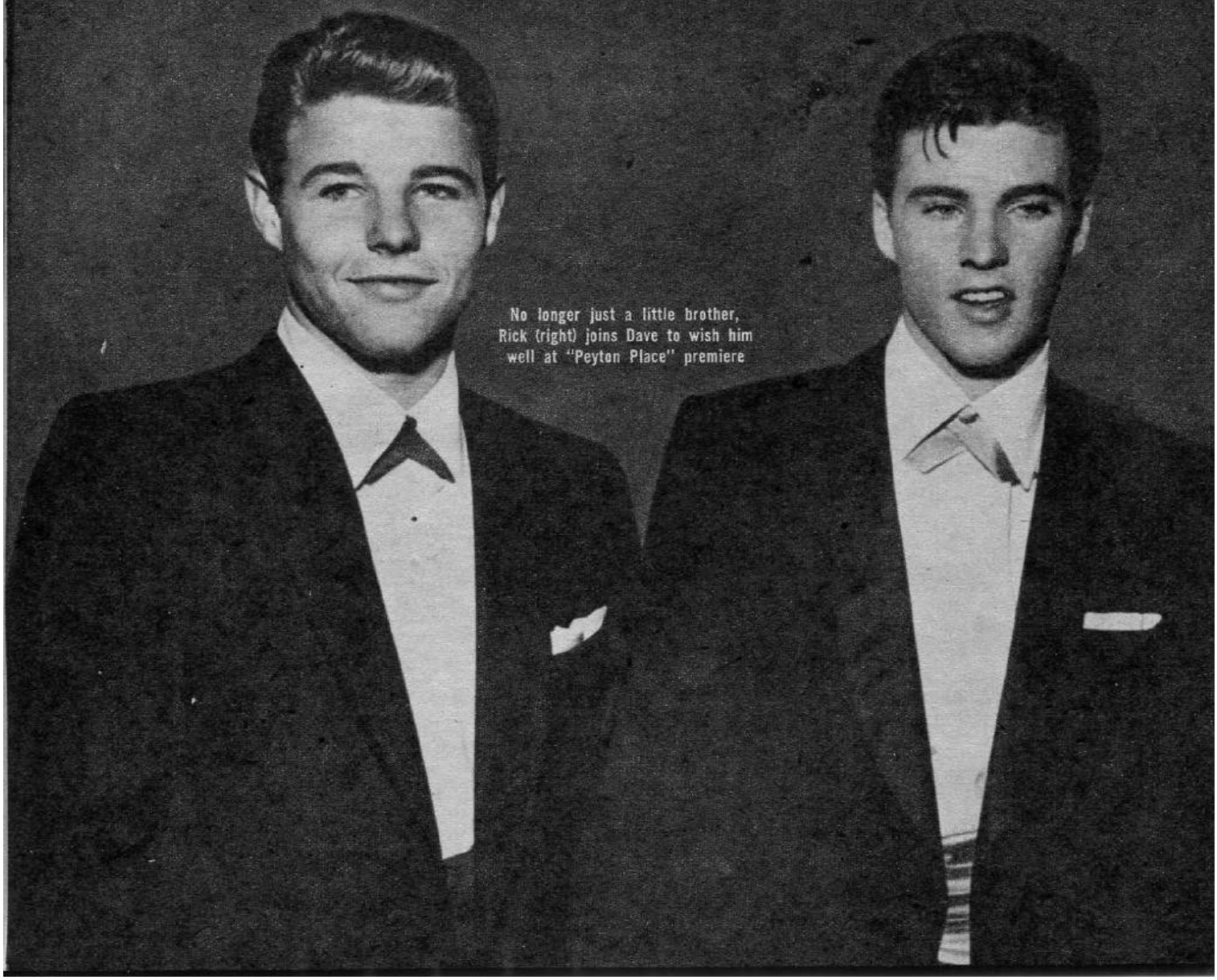
He's on the top right now, and it's exciting. Maybe the limelight won't last—but Rick has more than that. He's spent his whole life in show business; he's a trouper. Maybe he knows what they can't teach at college—and for him that may be knowledge enough.

DAVE:		RICK:
October 24, 1936, New York City	BORN	May 8, 1940, Teaneck, New Jersey
At age twelve	FIRST RADIO SHOW	At age eight
Peyton Place	FIRST GROWN-UP MOVIE	Rio Bravo
Two years at UCLA	SCHOOLING	High School Graduate
Five feet, eleven inches	HEIGHT	Six feet
175 lbs.	WEIGHT	160 lbs.
Light brown hair, blue eyes	COLORING	Dark brown hair, blue eyes
Harriet	TAKES AFTER	Ozzie
Methodical, cheerful, usually calm	TEMPERAMENT	Impulsive, sometimes moody

to himself, he was Dave's

"POOR LITTLE FOOL"

of a brother



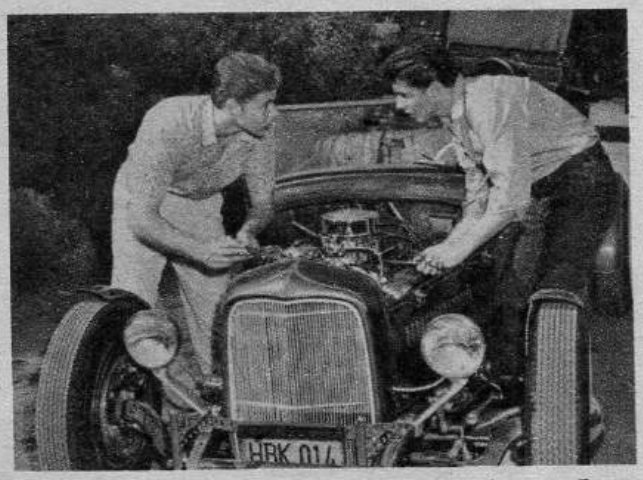
No longer just a little brother, Rick (right) joins Dave to wish him well at "Peyton Place" premiere

for years he was just the KID BROTHER

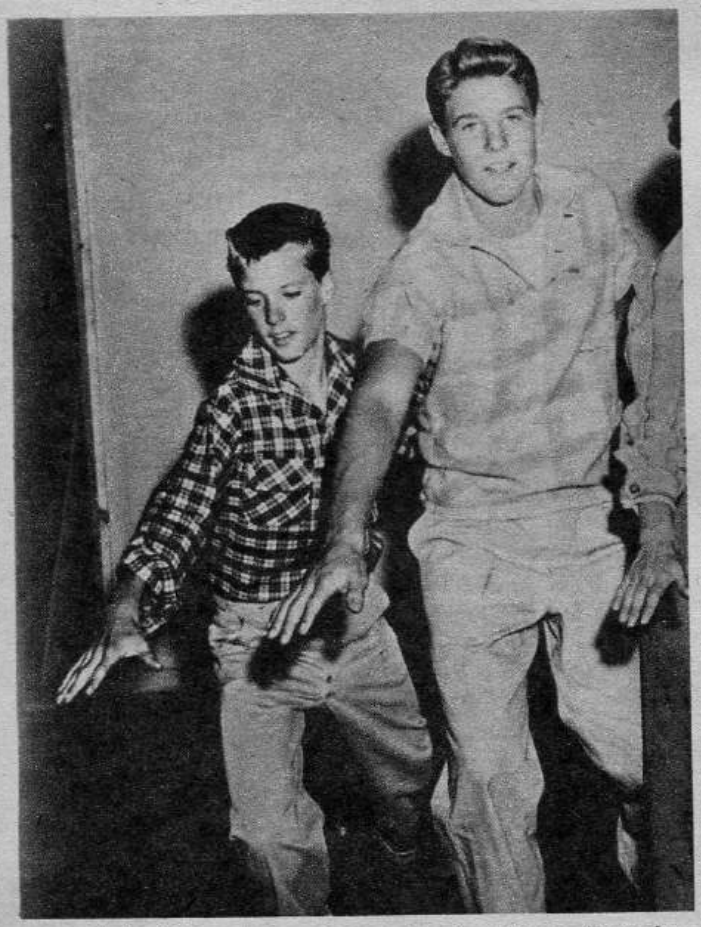
Rick was still "too young" when Dave became a Cub Scout. Suddenly Dave, his playmate, seemed to grow up —without him. And this left Rick a bit lonely.

Rick and Dave grew up together, did everything from school work to boxing together. But 3½ years is a big distance apart.

When Dave was seventeen, he got his first car. It was just a beat-up jalopy, but to Rick, it was heaven to be allowed to help Dave tinker with motor. He felt grown-up.



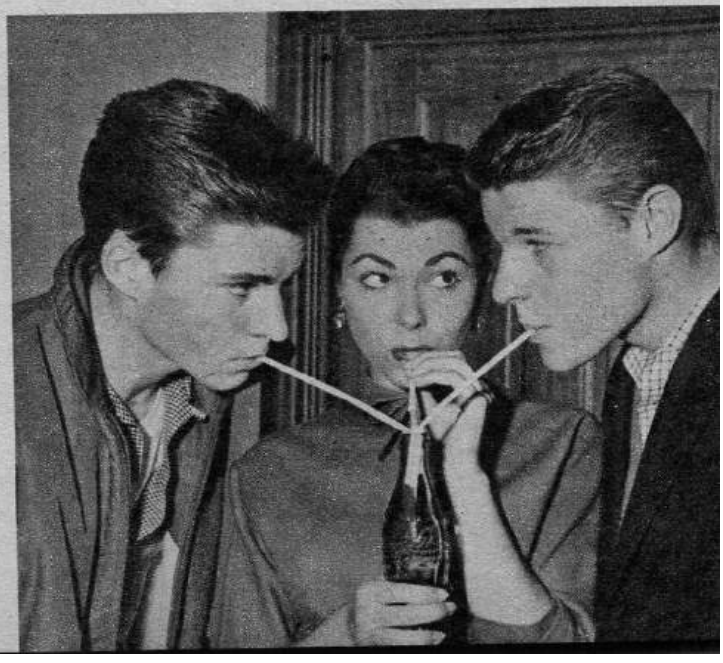
A few years later, Rick *was* grown-up—and it was Dave who helped him get a car ready for a neighborhood race. The best part was—they were doing it together.



Today Rick stands an inch taller than Dave. But when this picture was taken, Rick was the shrimp. Dave was starting to date, but Rick still had to be in bed by 9:30.

Today the boys are not only equals but the closest friends. They have never been jealous, sometimes even date the same girl (here Barbara Wilson) without jealousy.

Things were better when Rick was fourteen. Dave was always helpful, ready to teach him anything he knew. Rick picked up golf fast, loved going around with Dave.



then one day he STOOD UP alone—and sang!

■ He'd been rich all his life, he'd been famous all his life, he'd been on radio *nearly* all his life, and for the past five years he'd been on TV—but it all came in a package: the Nelsons, a family that played together and stayed together under one big spot.

It's different standing up alone. If there's applause it's for you—nobody else. If there's laughter it may be *at* you instead of with you and who's there to let you know in a glance which it is? You're on your own. If you make it, you feel so big you can burst. . .

Rick made it quick and easy. He was just sitting around on the set between takes of *The New Adventures Of Ozzie and Harriet*; he was strumming a borrowed guitar. (Now he uses the one Ozzie gave him for a birthday present. His brother says, "Ricky's never taken a guitar lesson. He just practices a few hours a day and he sounds like a pro.")

So that afternoon he was strumming and singing "for my own amazement" when someone from a recording company strolled onto the sound stage and walked up to the music.

Sure, Ricky would like to make a record. Why not? A little rock 'n' roll: "I'm Walkin'" on one side, a little ballad: "A Teen-ager's Romance" on the other. Didn't sound bad at all.

They told him he'd have to go out and plug it a little. Sure, he'd do that. One morning in April he drove over to the Los Angeles Hamilton High School. He didn't expect it—all the windows on the side where he had parked were full of faces. It got him a little nervous. After all, it was the first time in his life he'd be singing before a live audience, paying or not.

He kept his eyes dead center when he walked onstage. Then he shouldered his guitar and stood there in front of the mike. For an introduction he grinned. That did it. A sound like thunder broke from the first twenty rows (mostly girls, Ricky noticed, when he recovered from the shock). He grinned again to stop them but that was like shifting into high. They screamed for "what seemed like an hour, but I guess it was about fifteen minutes—or maybe thirteen."

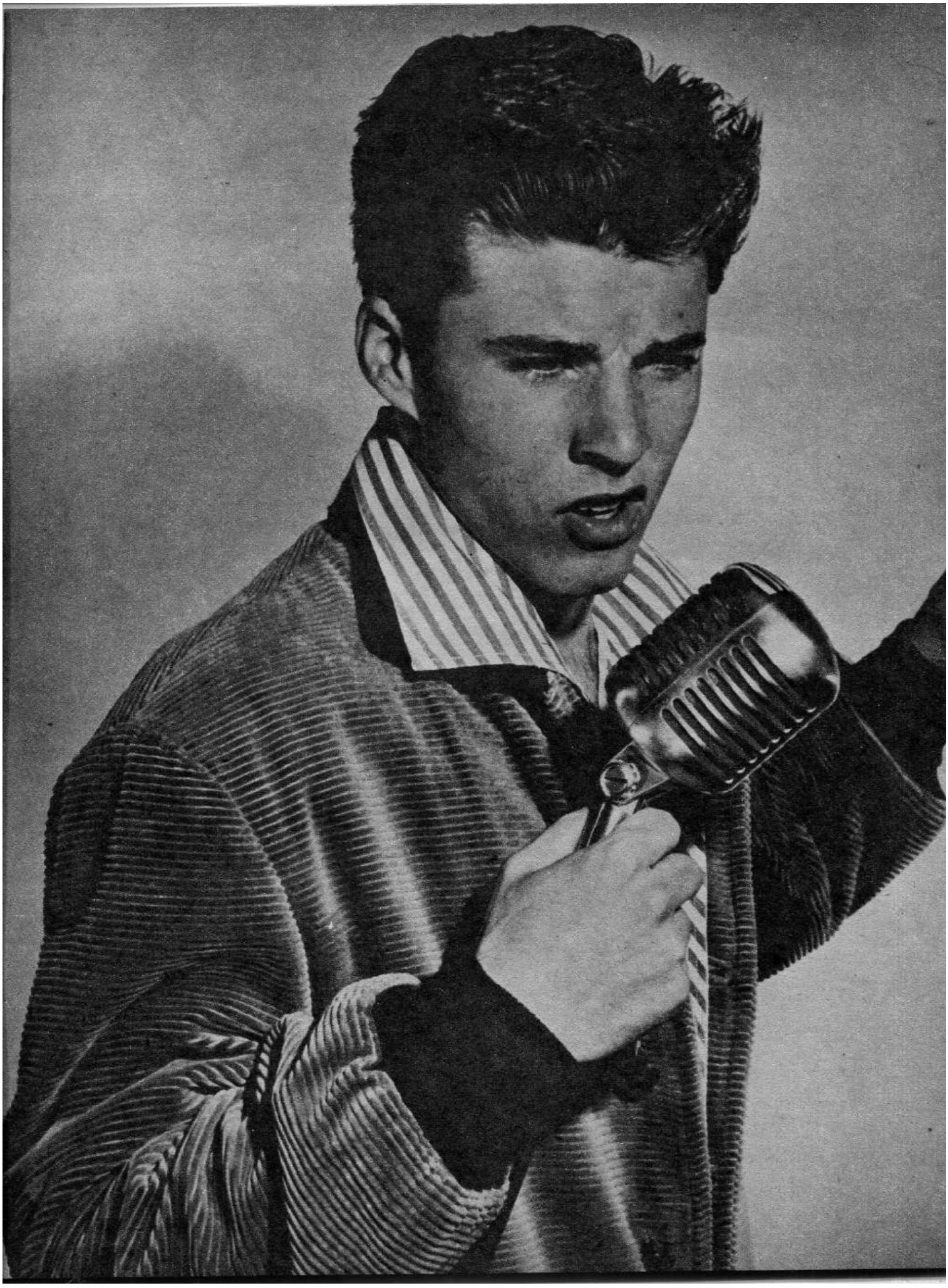
Then they let Ricky sing. Nobody wanted to go back to class. The principal bribed them. He promised that Ricky would give a repeat performance an hour later. An hour later 1,200 kids jammed the auditorium. It took eight football players to escort Rick to his car. "I guess I'll never forget it," he says. "I'd heard and read about such things happening to Elvis and others, but I never dreamed it could happen to me. . ."

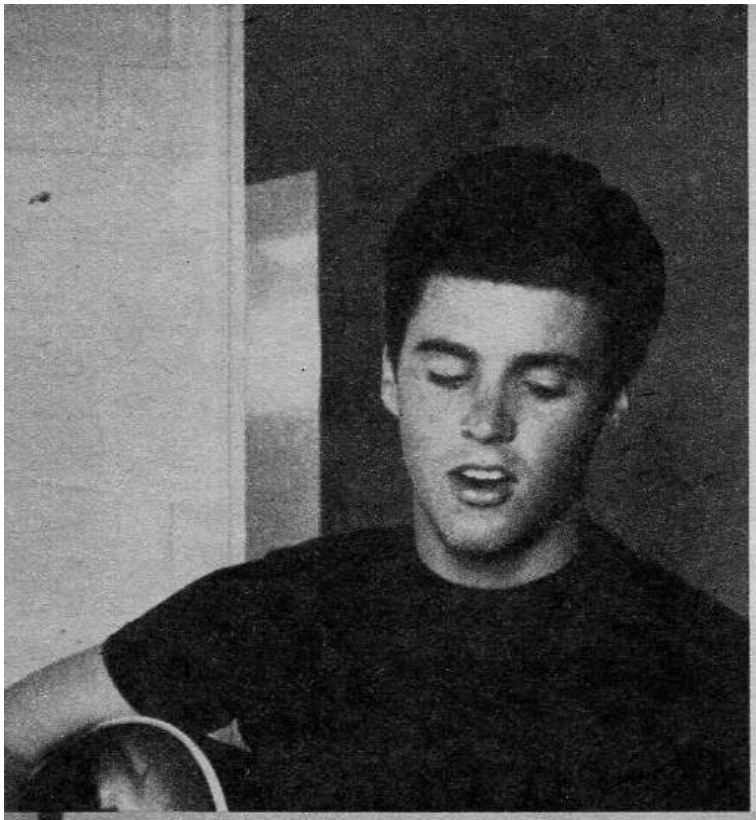
Ozzie took his cue from those high-school kids and built an entire TV episode around Ricky's singing. For three consecutive weeks one side or the other of his record was featured. The record's sale boomed to the million mark. Within six weeks of its release Rick's personal fan mail topped 6,000 letters a week. Three months later he had 1,000 fan clubs; and 150 girls in Cleveland embroidered his name on their sweaters!

"But I still have to put the arm on Dad for a couple of extra bucks," Ricky said. Because he said it, it got printed. That was even crazier than the singing; that was being a celebrity.

Sooner or later it would have come out—the fact that when he stands alone Ricky becomes a magnet for every teen-age girl within sighting distance. He has the magic touch that makes a star. It's a combination of natural grace and natural talent. It's also partly the glow that came from his discovering that he *could* be a success on his own, that he wasn't merely the Nelsons' youngest—he was Rick.

When Rick got home it was all the same and all different. He's still a fixture on the family's TV show; he still has the same friends and the same living habits, but now he makes news and he's got new worries. "I could be a has-been at nineteen," he's been heard to say, gloomily, "If rock 'n' roll goes. . ."





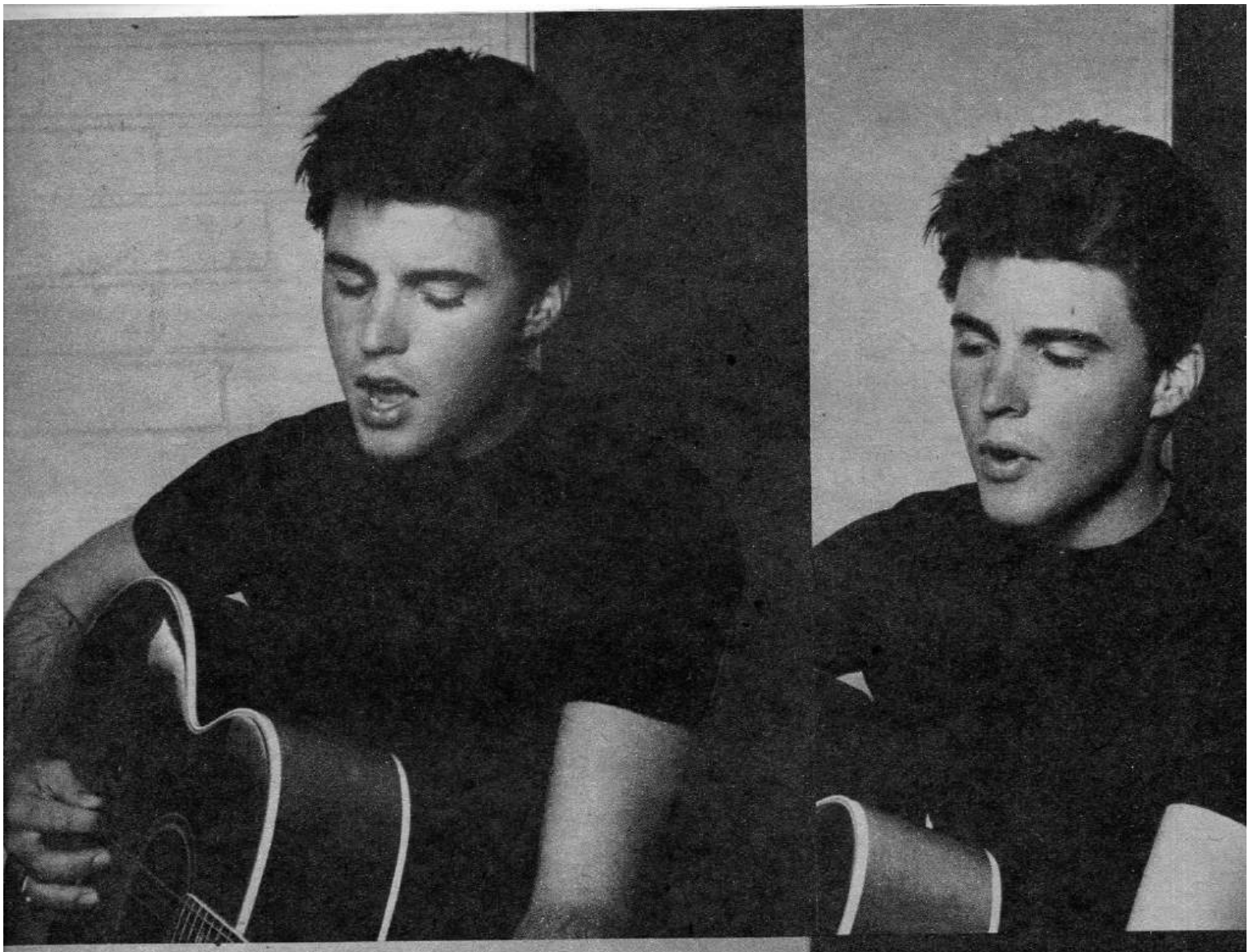
■ He went at that guitar the way he used to go at tennis—with everything. (When Ozzie bought him his drums back in the old days, they had to sound-proof his room.) Dave wasn't surprised about the whole thing: "I don't think it's so amazing that my brother blossomed as a singer," he said. "He's been singing since he was six years old. It didn't *always* sound so great, but I suppose even Crosby had to get a start somewhere. . ."

Rick was even calmer. "I'm happy about the records because they show I can do something on my own. That's what the average kid wants to do—something on his own."

To most people, Rick was no longer, by any stretch

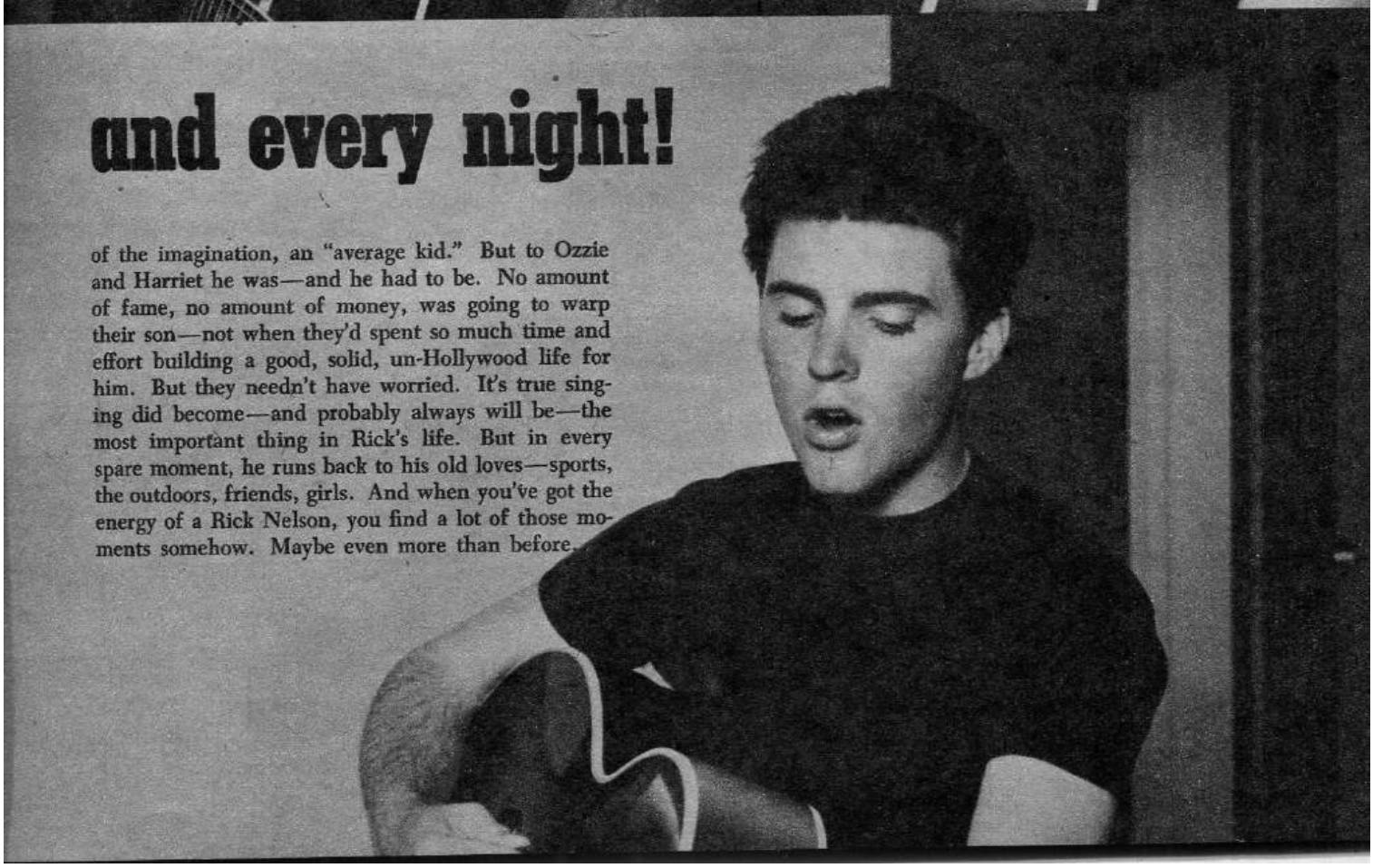
there was

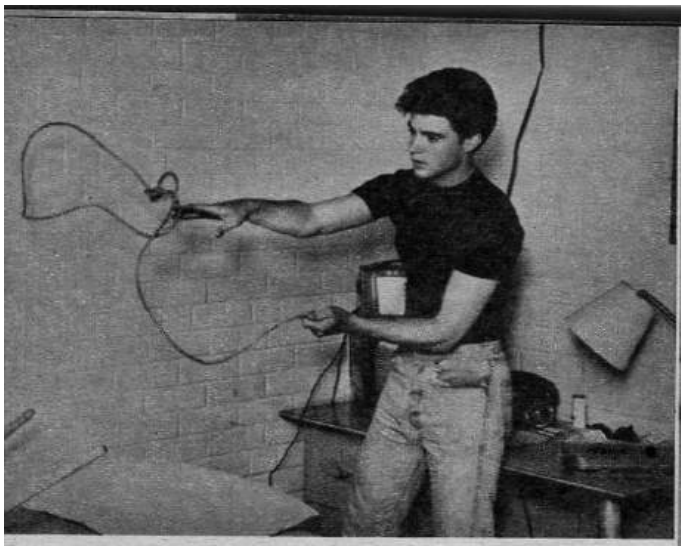
"GOOD ROCKIN' TONIGHT"



and every night!

of the imagination, an "average kid." But to Ozzie and Harriet he was—and he had to be. No amount of fame, no amount of money, was going to warp their son—not when they'd spent so much time and effort building a good, solid, un-Hollywood life for him. But they needn't have worried. It's true singing did become—and probably always will be—the most important thing in Rick's life. But in every spare moment, he runs back to his old loves—sports, the outdoors, friends, girls. And when you've got the energy of a Rick Nelson, you find a lot of those moments somehow. Maybe even more than before.

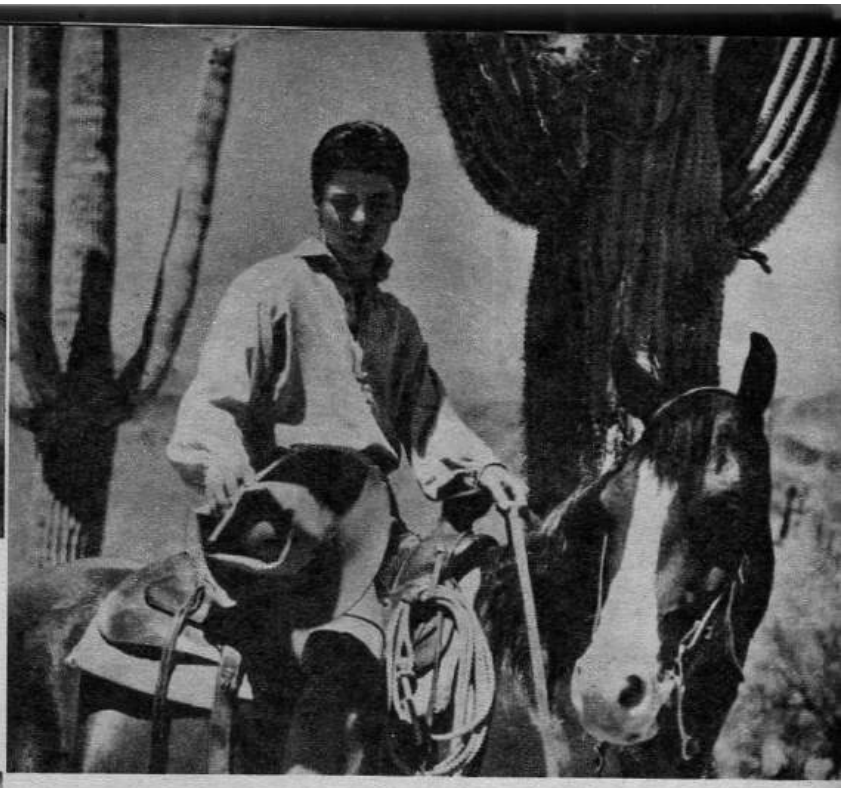




↑ *"Anything physical is duck soup for Rick," they say. For* Rio Bravo *he learned to handle a rope.*

Horseback riding he's loved since he was a kid, longed for a horse of his own. Now he owns one. →

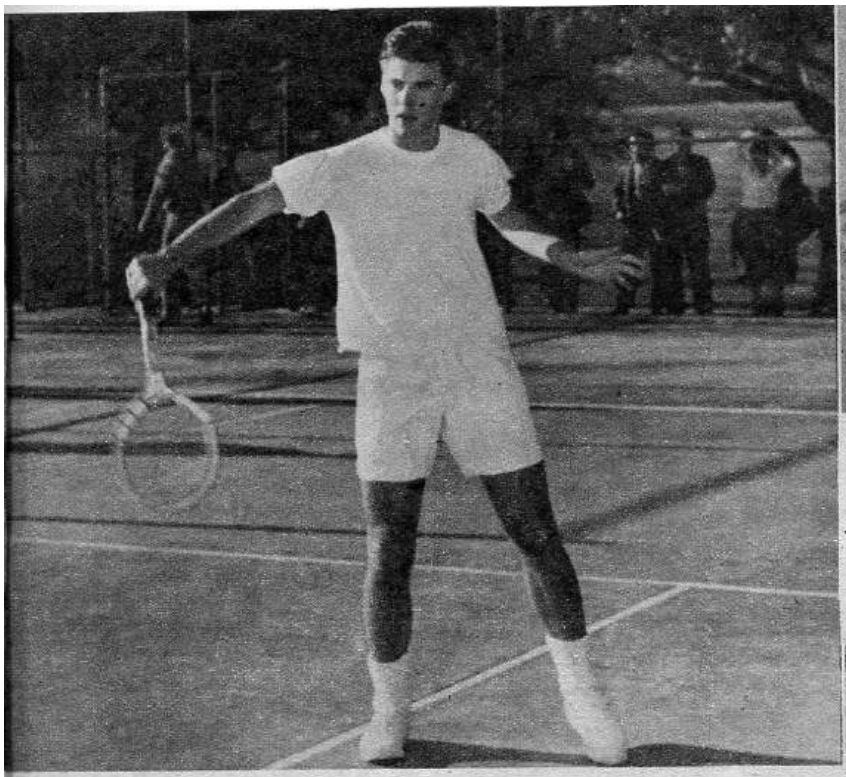
Dancing is his favorite indoor—or outdoor—sport. ↓ *If a girl can't rock and roll she can forget Rick.*

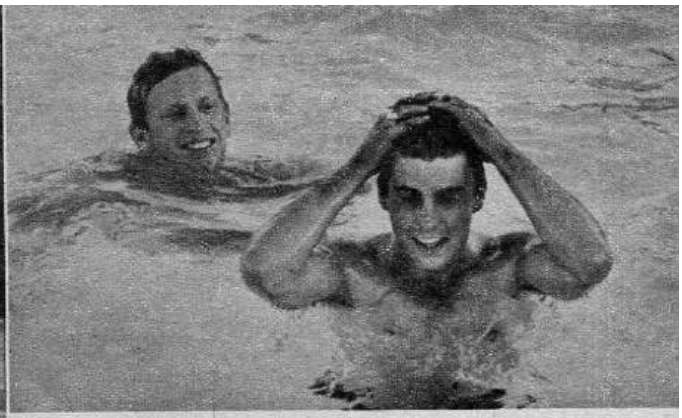


he explodes in

↑ *Guitar isn't Rick's only instrument. He's played the piano since he was a child, can handle all percussion instruments, including bongos.*

← *Rick has definite opinions about women's clothes; unlike most fellows, will take time to go shopping with a girl. Here, with Marianne Gaba.*



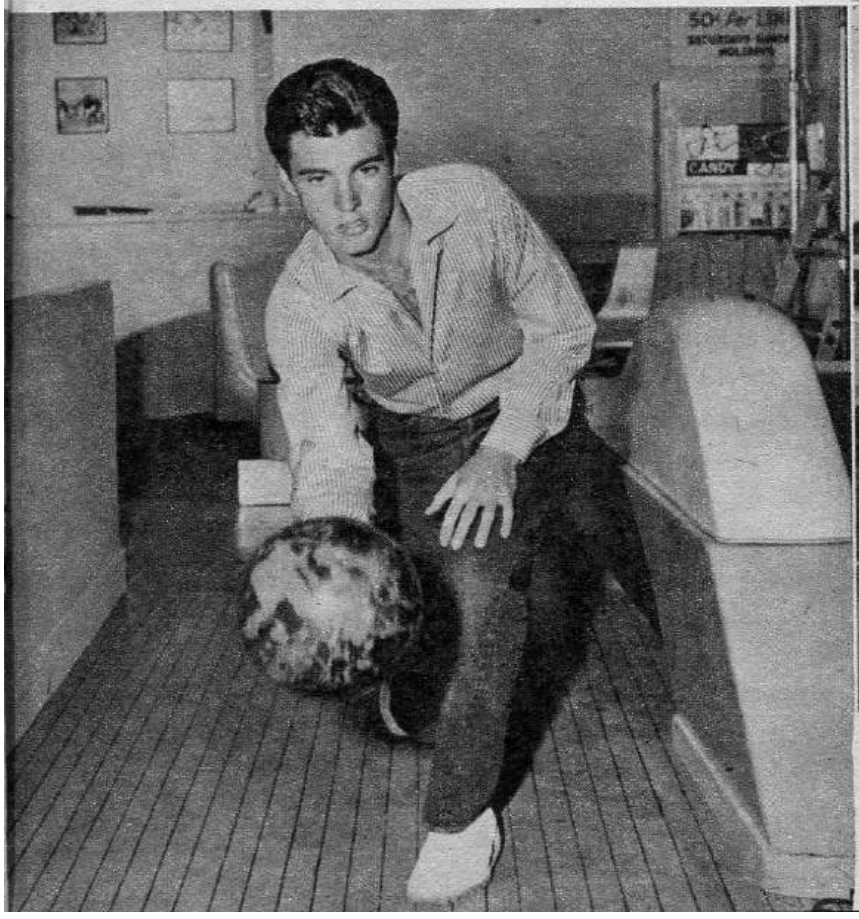


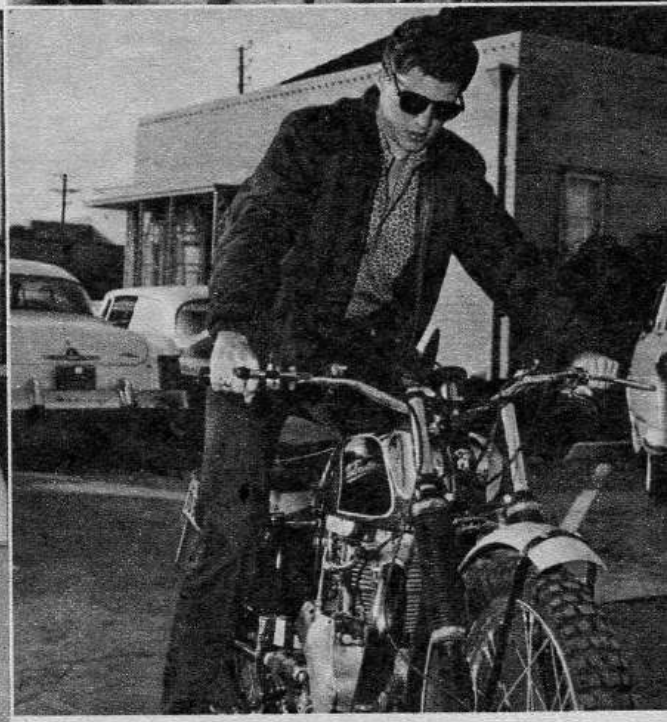
↑ *Rick dives, swims anywhere there's water. On tour he relaxes best in a pool with a friend, loves pool parties.*

← *At tennis he's almost a pro, was a member of a championship team in high school, still finds time to play top game.*

↓ *Making* Rio Bravo *he discovered bull fights. At his first he screamed himself hoarse—and got a cheer from crowd.*

all directions!





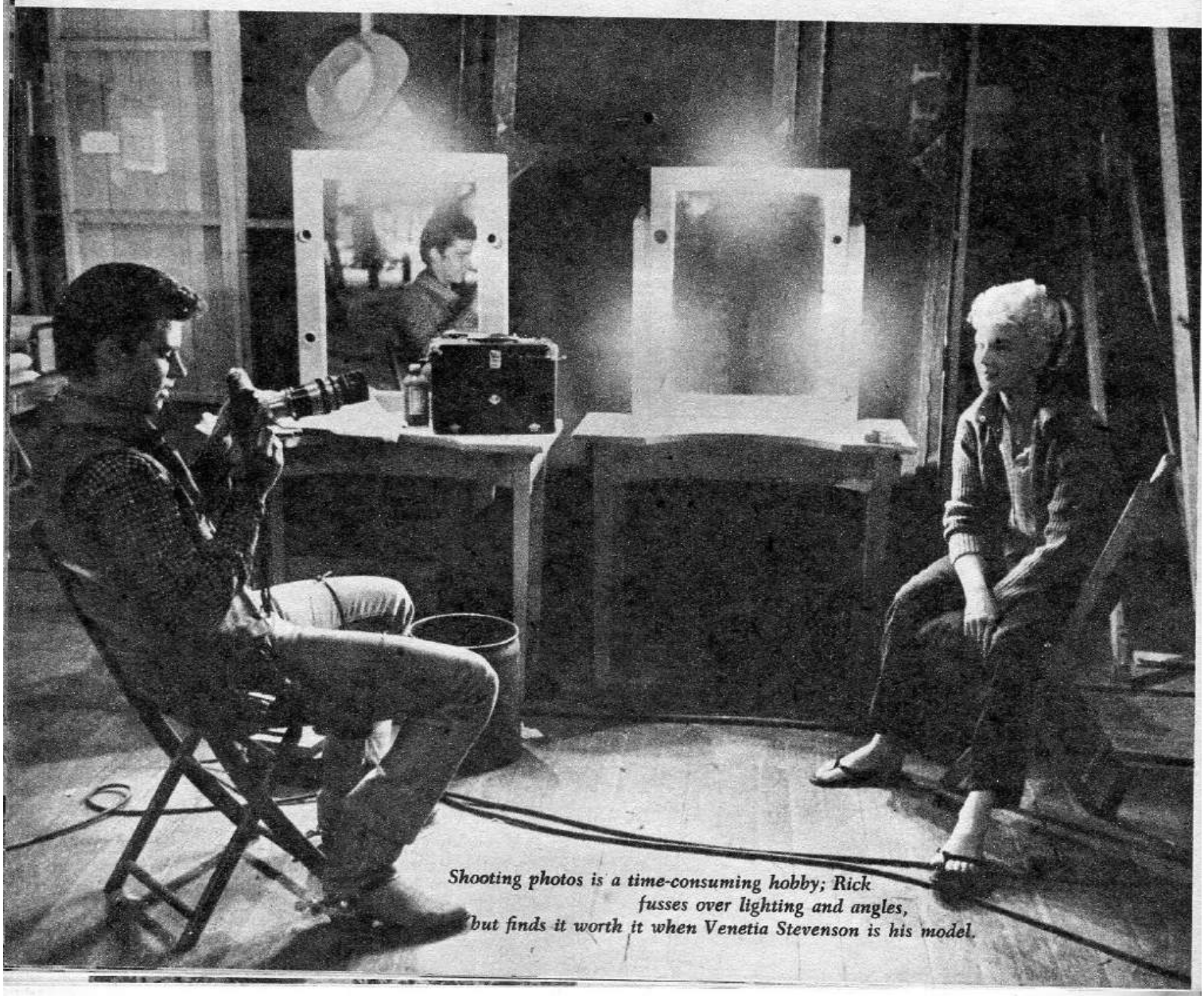
↑ *Motorcycle belongs to Dave, but Rick uses it more than he does, rides it around studio lot, takes dates for a spin*

← *A favorite date is a bowling one; Rick complains that his average is slipping; he doesn't have time to practice*

Dave prefers his movie camera to Rick's still-life Kodak. (Eastman is one of the Nelsons' sponsors.) Boys posed for each other while Rick's Porsche was still in working order.

These are two of Rick's best shots: his favorite of Venetia Stevenson, and a candid of John Wayne at the bullfight he and Rick went to together. Both were taken while Rick was working on Rio Bravo.

taking pictures takes time...



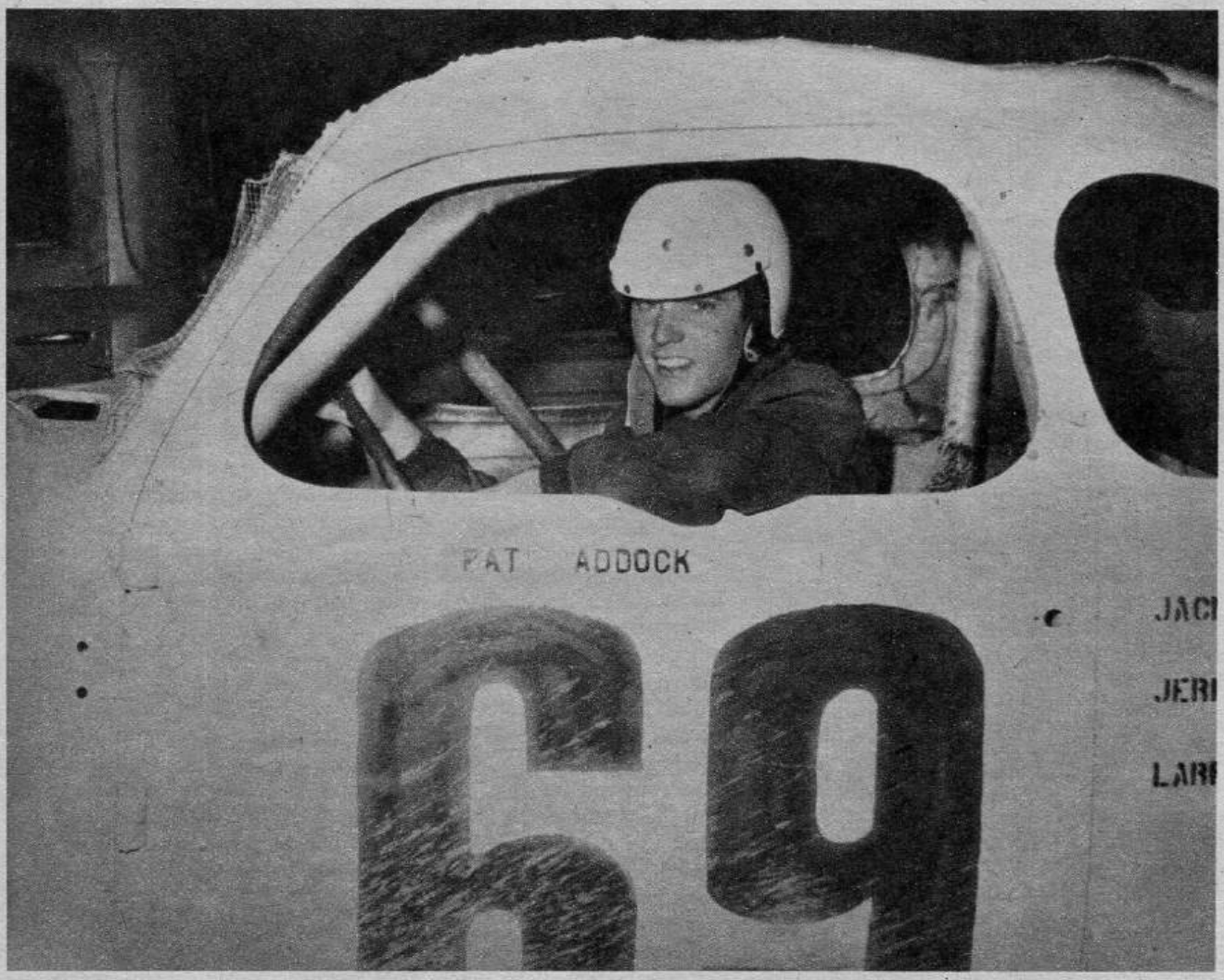
Shooting photos is a time-consuming hobby; Rick fusses over lighting and angles, but finds it worth it when Venetia Stevenson is his model.

Like Jimmy Dean, Rick sneaked over to a race track on his day off, drove a souped-up car in a race.

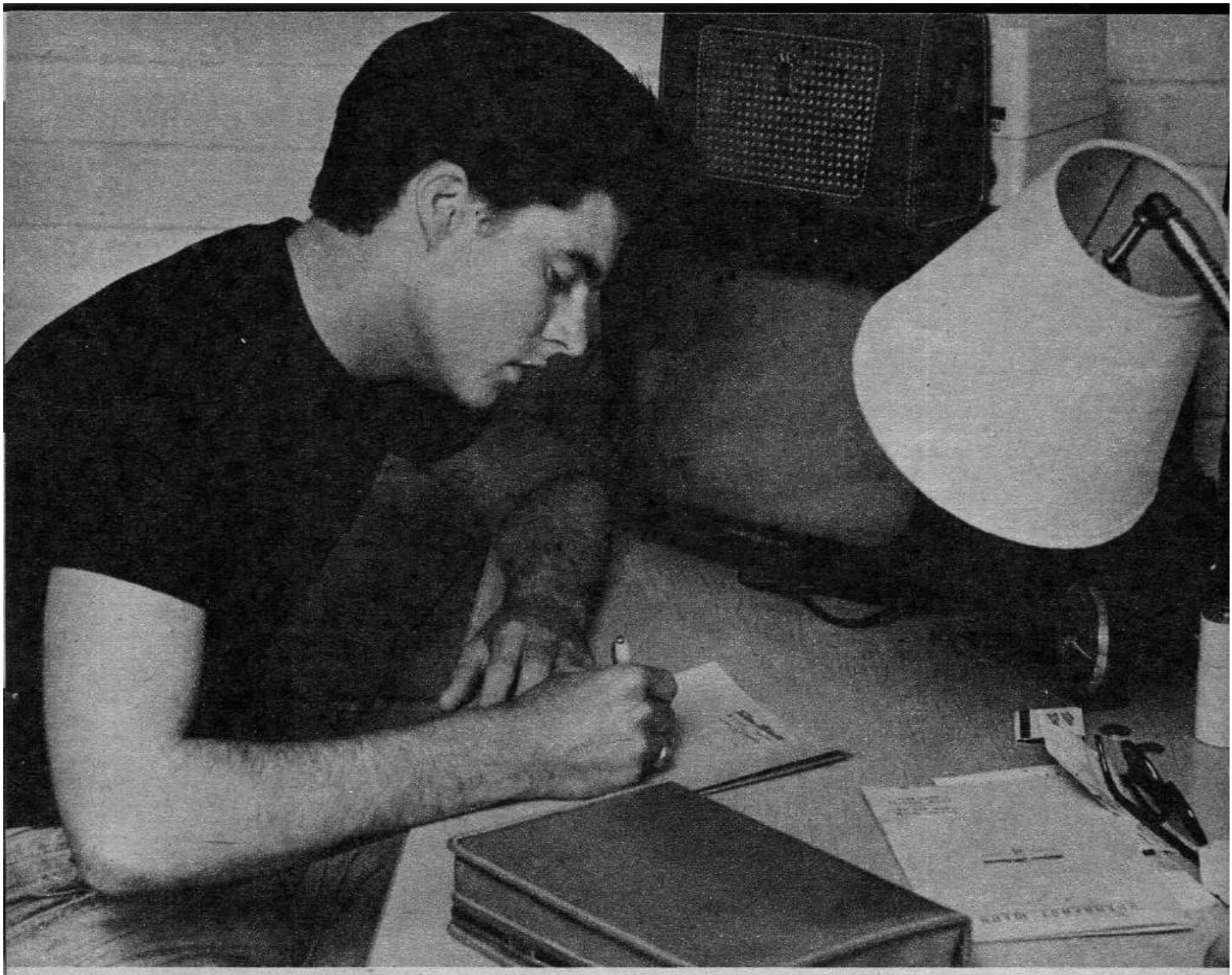
Before race he was nervous, but sure he'd come home in one piece. Friends gathered around to wish him good luck, painted his name on car.

He came out the winner. He got a trophy, but the studio heard— and Rick got a bawling out!

taking races takes guts...



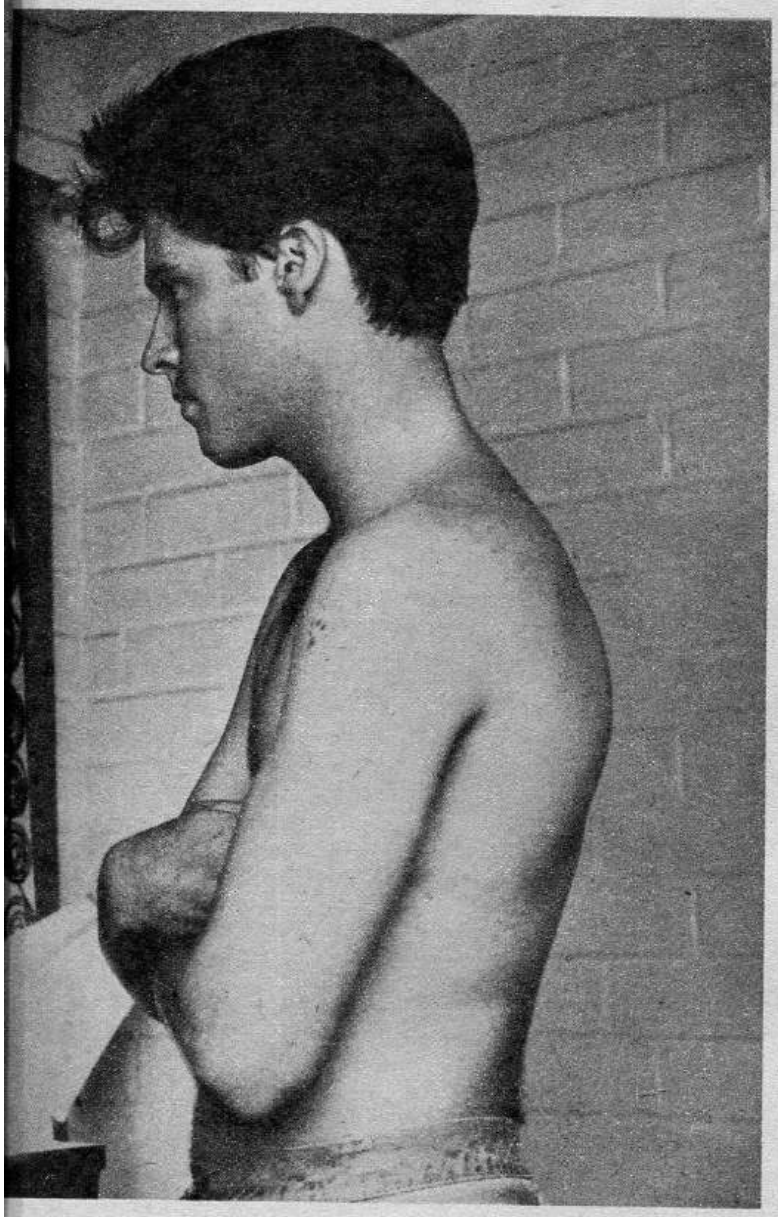
For this race, all glass was taken out of the car, and the driver strapped in. Object: to bump every other car off the road!



Rick scribbles songs on hotel stationery, backs of envelopes, record jackets—whatever's handy when inspiration comes.

sometimes he likes to write...

■ Rick's hobbies keep him on the go an awful lot of the time—but every so often he reaches the bottom of his enormous fund of physical energy, and has to stop and slump down in a chair and just relax. It's not easy for Rick; he's restless. Even when he's just resting he usually feels a drive to do something. So he picks up a pencil and a sheet of paper and turns to his first love, music. He jots down a tune that's been buzzing half-formed in his head for days. He scribbles the words that seem to fit it automatically. He adds a title, and he's got a song! Nobody taught Rick how to do it. He picked up the knack in the same sharp way he learned to play tennis and to repair a car engine. His first attempts were crude and amateurish, but his friends—especially Lorrie Collins—encouraged him to keep at it. With her he wrote a number called "My Gal." "It wasn't the greatest," Rick admits, "but it was my first song that didn't sound like a carbon copy of three others." Now Rick's a pro in the field: his later numbers have been published, and on the flip side of "Poor Little Fool" he had a chance to record his own song—"Don't Leave Me This Way"—for the first time. It's the tune he's most proud of so far, but we're sure there'll be others even prettier. Because with everything Rick does, he insists on doing it well.



sometimes he turns his back on the world

As a child Rick, shyest of Nelsons, hid behind David.

■ "Rick is the greatest," a former date of his said recently, "as long as you get him on a *good* day. But heaven preserve us when Ricky retreats." There's been a lot of talk about Rick's moods, his withdrawing into himself, refusing to talk to people, turning sullen at the drop of a hat. And a lot of annoyance at him for it. After all, what has Rick Nelson got to be sullen about? Answer: Nothing. Explanation: He isn't. The matter with Rick is that he is—and always was—painfully shy. As children, both he and David would shake hands and say "How-do-you-do" when introduced to strangers—after which they would retreat, preferably behind their folks. As they grew older, they learned to cover up in public, and their excellent manners fronted for them in private. David today has come completely out of his shell. But Rick is still, to a large extent, running scared. Believe it or not, before he will ask a girl out for the first time, he has his friends sound her out to find out if the answer will be yes or no. He simply can't face the thought of getting turned down in person—and he's so far from conceited that he always expects it to happen. That's why he takes offense so easily, can't brush off a dig or a rejection as unimportant. Take, for instance, a girl he had dated half a dozen times, really went for. Rick got in from out of town one night at about ten and phoned her. The girl was sleepy, didn't feel like talking. "All right," snapped Rick. "If you're so tired go back to bed!" He hung up and never called again. "Moody," was the girl's reaction. "Hurt," would have been more accurate. The only time his shyness really disappears is when Rick's with his fans. He can take on mobs of them with a grin, loving every minute. The only time he's ever shown his claws to them is when there's a heckler in a back-stage crowd. At those times Rick will look up from the autographs he's signing, size up the wise-guy and—if the heckler is big enough—invite him to step outside. So far, he's had no takers.

In 1953 Rick went to court with Dave and their parents for approval of a new contract: $1100 a week each for the Nelson family TV show.

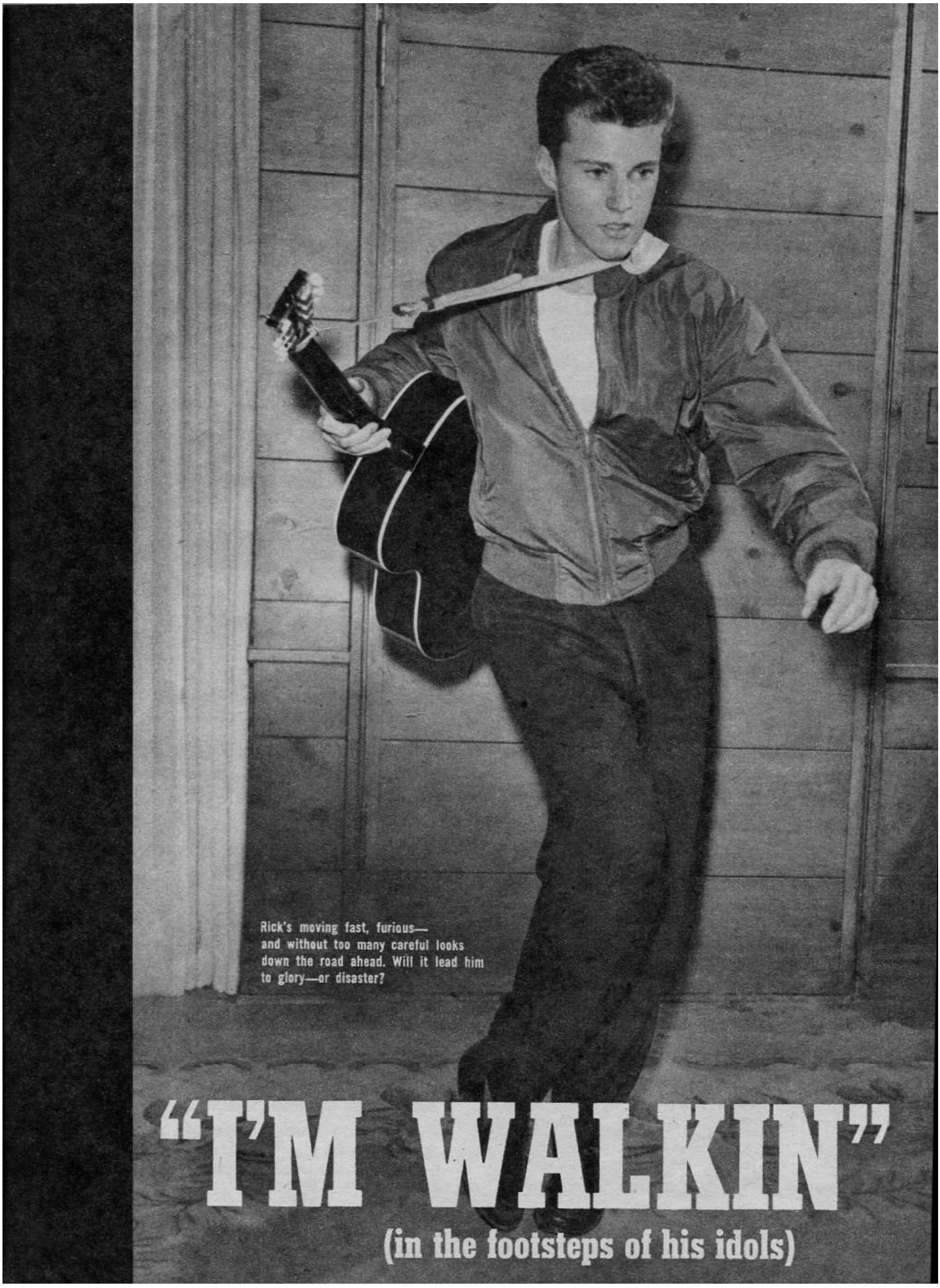
whatever he does, he makes money

■ The truth of the matter is, Rick Nelson doesn't know *how* much he's got in the bank. A fortune, yes —but is it a quarter of a million, a million, a million and a half? Not only does he not know, he doesn't care. What's in the trust fund is "old money," dough he earned as a kid on the radio show, on TV, in his two childhood movies. During those years, he would be required to appear in court, along with Dave and his parents, every time a new contract was signed. Having read the terms of the contract, the judge would invariably peer sternly at Ozzie; you could almost see him remembering the tragedy of Jackie Coogan, whose fabulous earnings as a child star were squandered before "The Kid" grew up. "The law," the judge would intone, "requires you to put away in trust a certain percentage of Eric Nelson's earnings . . ." He would get no farther. "We put away," Ozzie would interrupt proudly, "one hundred per cent." And except for paying necessary income taxes, that was exactly what the family did. Rick's allowance, his clothes, his care, all came out of Ozzie's pocket. That was the way it was in other families, so that was the way it was in his.

So all the "old money" is sitting in the trust fund, gathering interest against the day when Rick will be twenty-one and entitled to claim it. "New money," on the other hand, pours in in a steady stream. Rick's new contract with Imperial Records, for example, guarantees him a thousand dollars a week for five years. What becomes of the "new money"? Taxes are taken out. Expenses are taken out. For Rick, expenses run high, because when he travels he takes his entire troupe, manager, accompanists, everybody —first class. Some other singers (we'll mention no names) have made it a practice to check themselves in at the best hotels, and lodge their entourage second class. Not Rick. If he eats steak, if he sleeps warm, so does everybody. Nonetheless, even after expenses, there's quite a hunk of money left. And every cent of it joins the "old money" in the bank!

Incredible? Not a bit. "After all," Ozzie says, speaking of himself and Harriet, "our financial situation isn't strained." He goes right on taking care of Rick, even to handing out pocket money, ten or twenty bucks at a time, since Rick gets no set allowance.

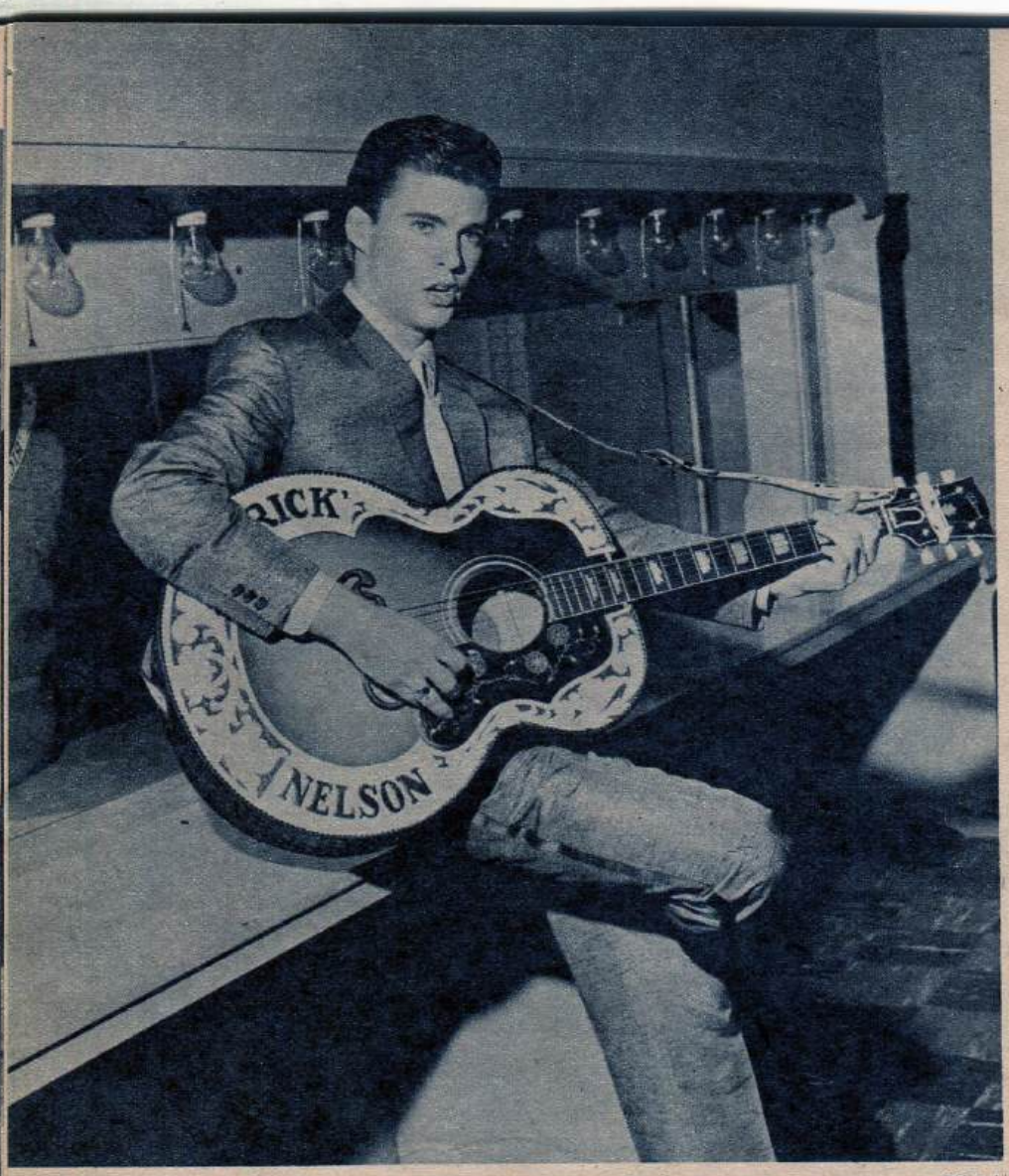
Does this suit Rick? To a T. His wants are simple—five dollars will cover almost any date he goes out on. He has almost no personal extravagances. The only thing he goes wild for (besides cars) is sport shirts, and those he buys and charges in Los Angeles. Ozzie pays the bill. Proof that this system is okay with Rick is easy: Anyone in Hollywood would be glad to lend him money against the day when he becomes 21. Nothing could interest Rick less. Money is the least and last thing on his mind.



Rick's moving fast, furious—
and without too many careful looks
down the road ahead. Will it lead him
to glory—or disaster?

"I'M WALKIN"

(in the footsteps of his idols)

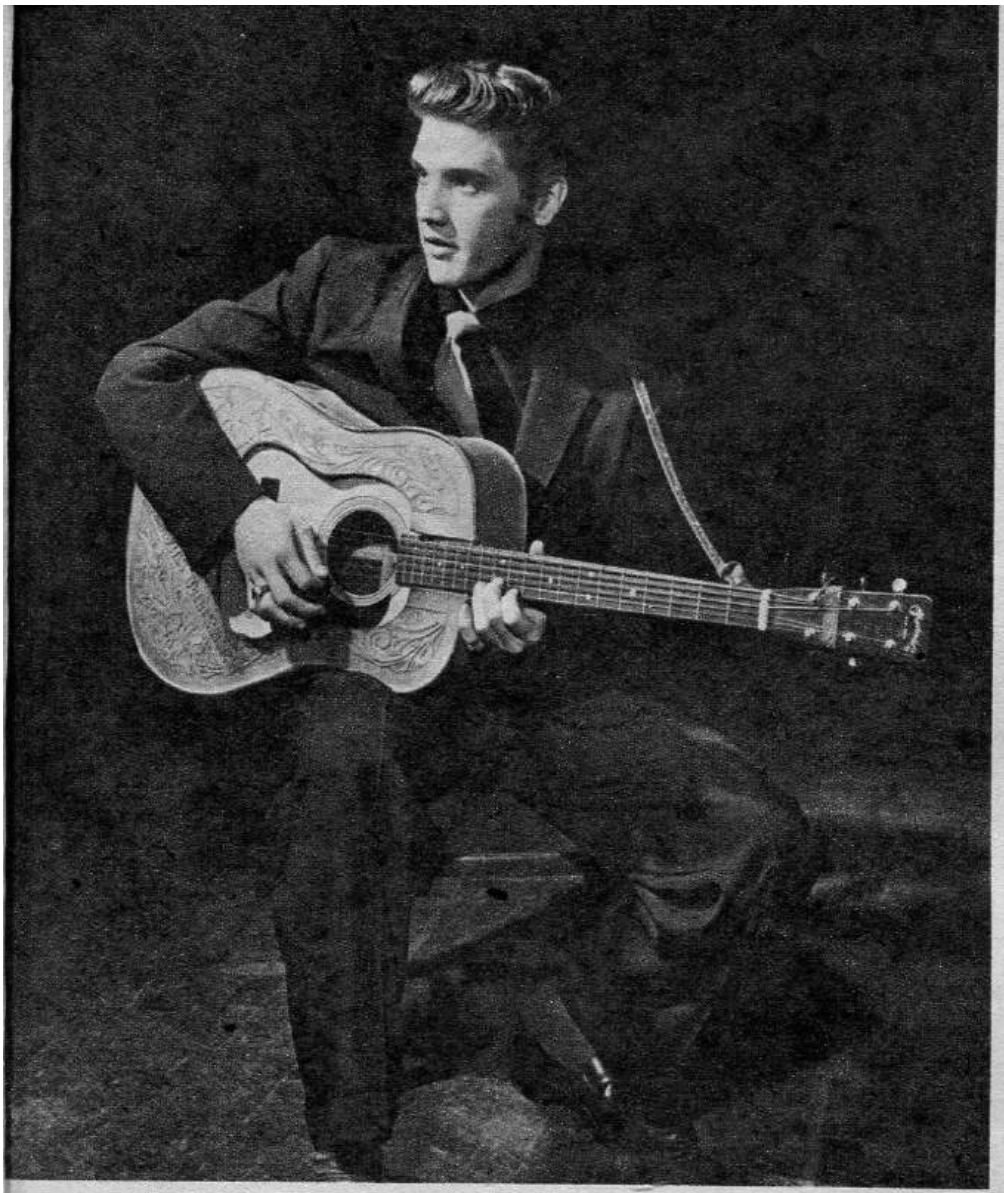


he's walkin'...

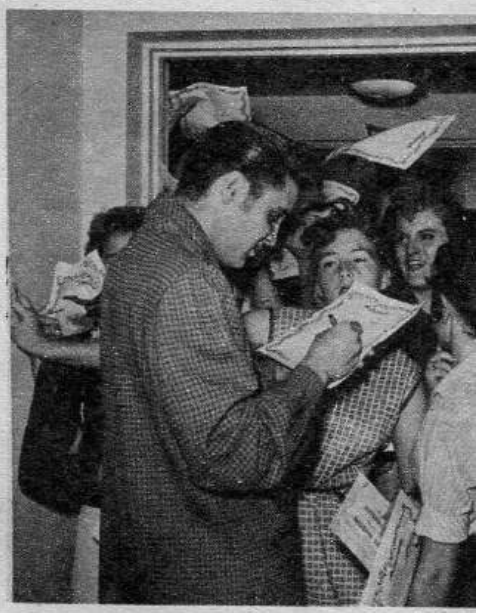
to personal glory— like Elvis

Rick's stage wardrobe is almost as varied—but not as expensive—as Elvis'.

Both boys need policemen to get them through the throngs that show up for their personal appearances. And both love it, keep their tempers no matter how boisterous the fans get. But if heckled, neither El nor Rick takes it calmly.

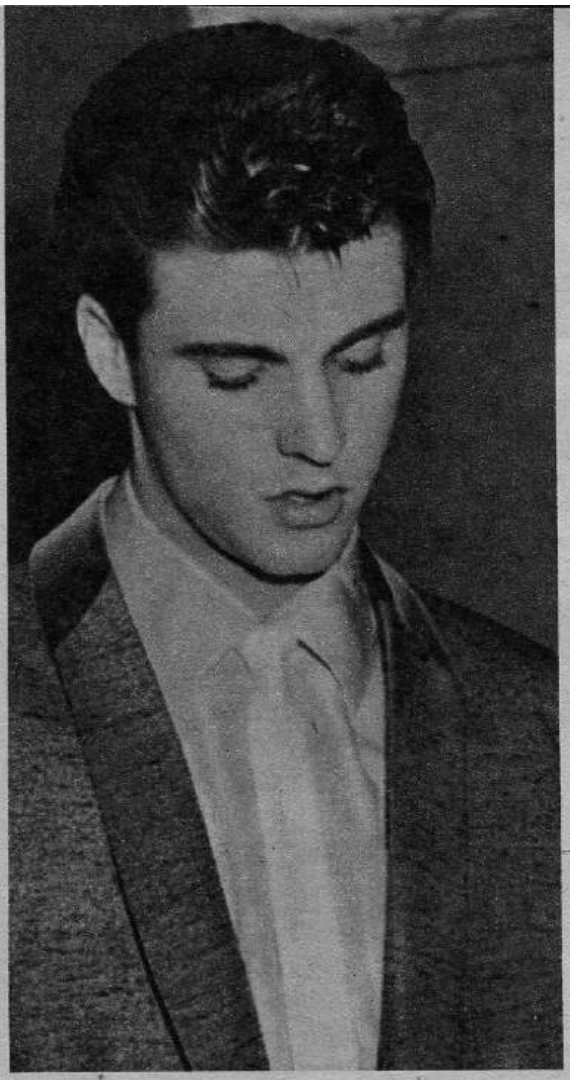


Rick: "Elvis is great in sideburns. They're dignified. My grandpa wore 'em."



Elvis may have signed more autographs than any other teenage idol, but Rick's records are the fastest-selling in the U.S.

■ In 1957 Rick announced the greatest thrill of his life: He had just touched Elvis Presley's gold jacket, draped on a hanger. Two months later he met Elvis himself on a studio lot and stood transfixed with awe, as tongue-tied as any fan. It was typical of Rick, impulsive, warm-hearted, easily moved, to go overboard for an idol. Within weeks of that meeting, friends began to comment on how Rick's resemblance to Elvis—always considerable—had increased. Rick was wearing his hair longer and his clothes louder. He even took to curling his upper lip back from his teeth in approved—or disapproved—Presley fashion. His singing style began to grow closer and closer to Elvis'. Rick began to reach for the low notes he had never attempted before, got them on record for the first time in "Poor Little Fool." He began to move around the stage more during his singing—and after one appearance on television he drew storms of protests over his "too-tight pants." At that point, Ozzie and Harriet stepped in with a little parental and professional advice: Be Yourself. Easier said than done. This year, if asked whether he worships El, Rick will blush, look surprised, mutter, "Gosh, no. I just admire him, that's all." Actually, he could do worse. Elvis achieved vast personal success and now is gaining professional respect as well. A passion for clothes is harmless, much more harmless than the one Rick developed when Jimmy Dean became his idol.

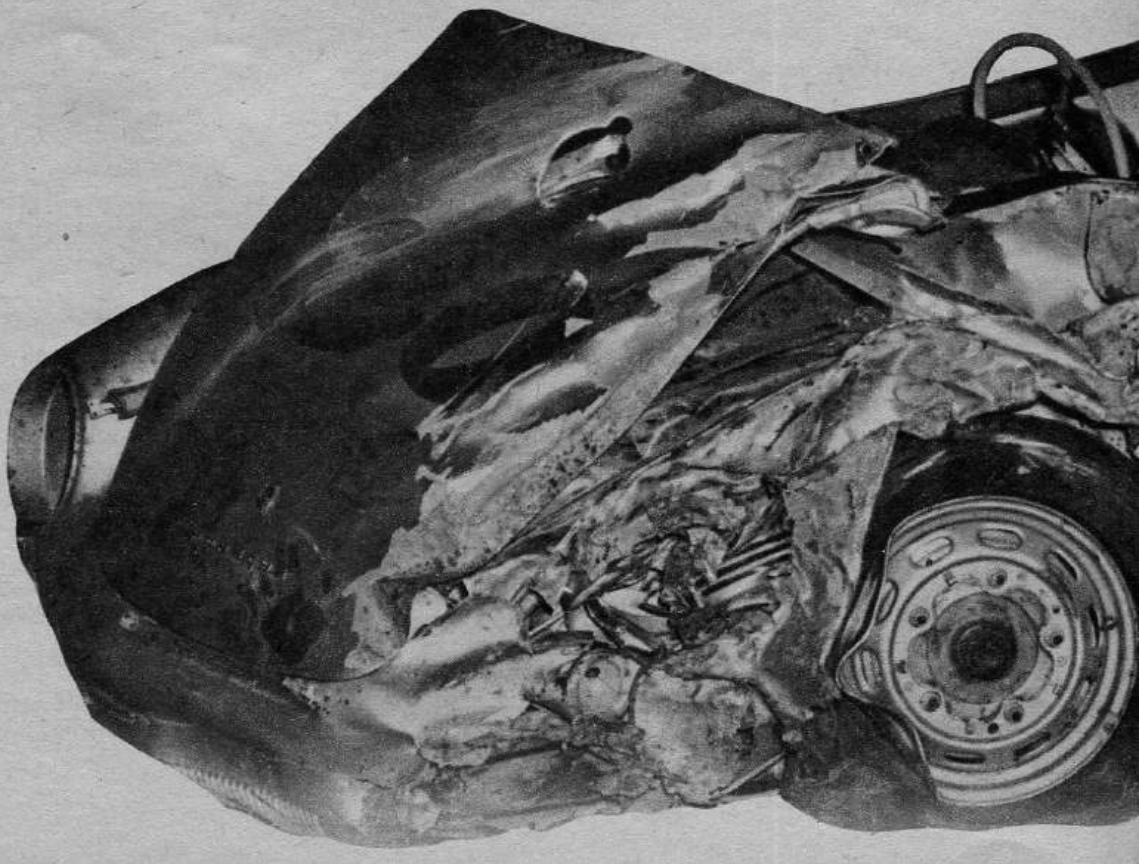


he's walkin' . . .

toward possible disaster—

like Jimmy

both boys drove Porsches into



■ "I wish Jimmy could have lived," Rick said recently. "He understood teen-agers and we understood him. He meant a lot." But Jimmy didn't live, and for a while it looked like Rick was determined to replace him—in everything. He had a head start in many ways. He holds himself like Jimmy, has the same need to express himself in performance, the same ways of covering up shyness. But that wasn't all, for Rick. He took up the drums because Jimmy had played them, he rode a scooter because Jimmy had liked them, and according to some people, he gives in to his dark moods from time to time because moodiness was part and parcel of Jimmy Dean.

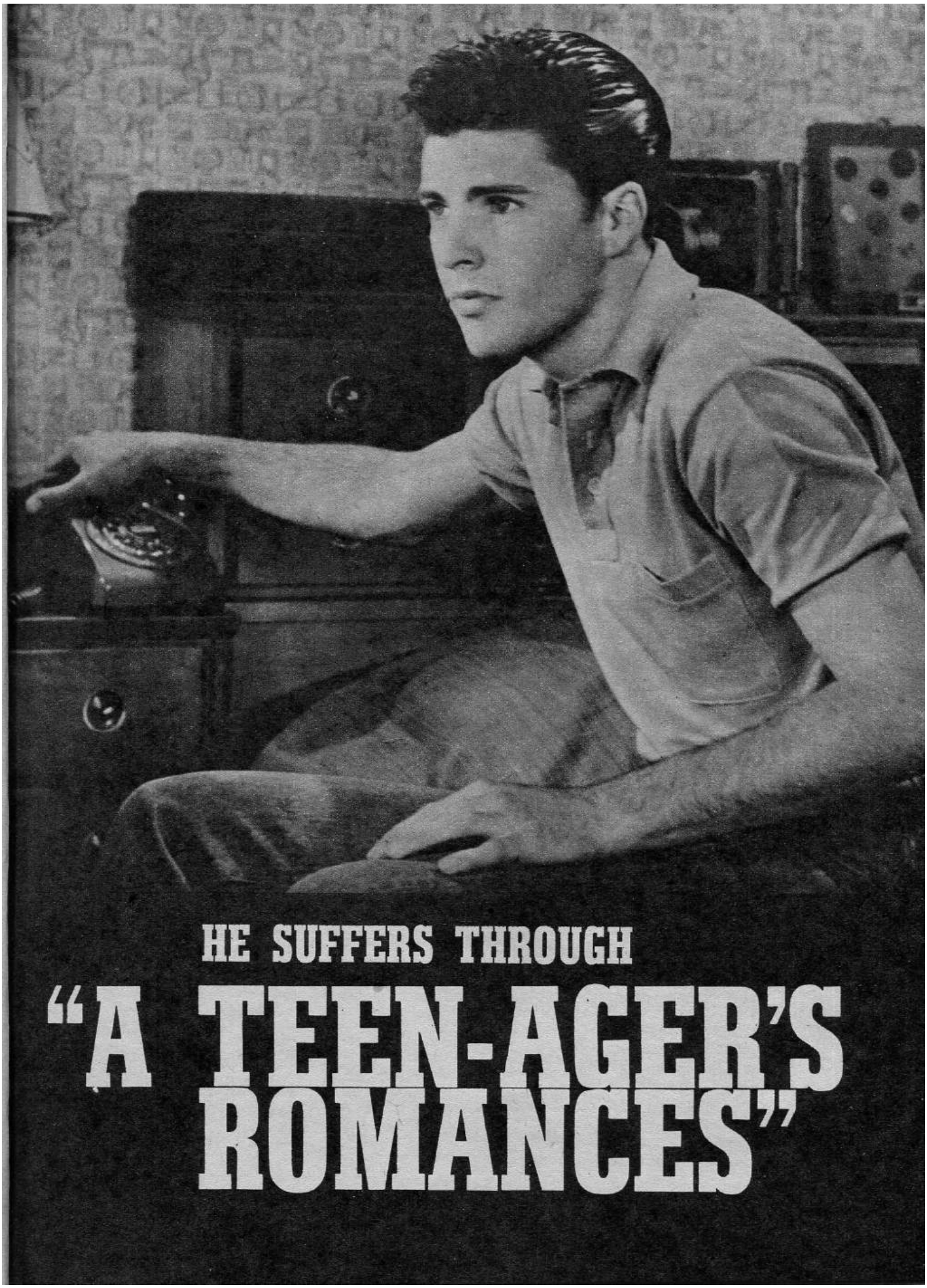
But when Rick talked his parents into giving him a Porsche—the fast, low sports car of the kind in which Jimmy died—for his first car and proceeded to drive it like a demon, passing off his dozens of traffic tickets with a casual "I guess I have to prove I can *go*"—then people started to worry. With reason. When he had owned the car only a few months, Rick misjudged a wet patch of pavement one day, "spun out," smashed the Porsche to bits—and almost killed himself. His injuries, patched up in the hospital, seem to have snapped him out of his identification with the tragic Jimmy; at least for now he drives a conventional hardtop (recently painted bronze) and realizes a guy's got to be himself.

tragic accidents at too-high speeds

he's walkin' . . .

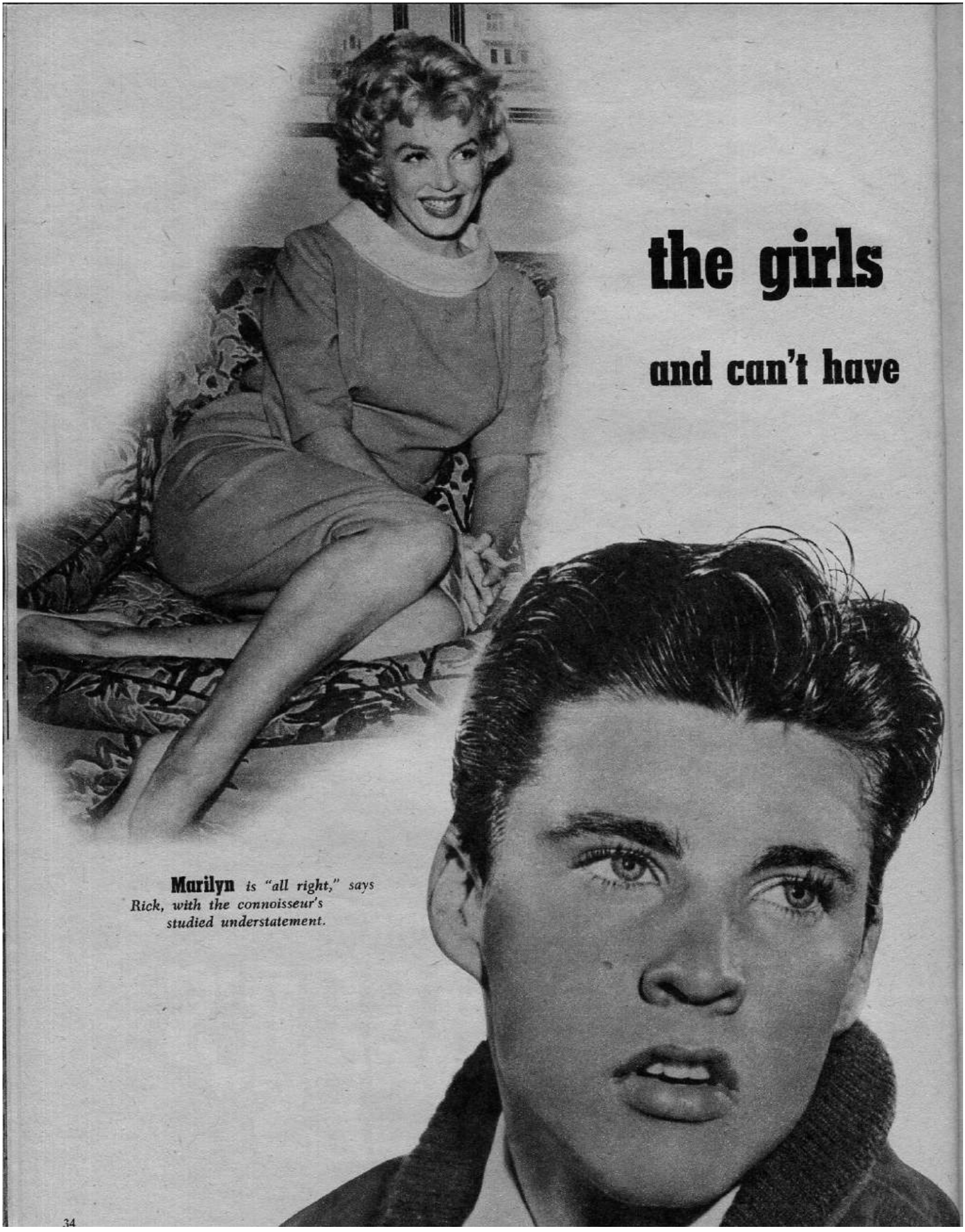
away from a nightmare

■ Even in his short singing career, Rick has had some tragic, heartsick moments. He's managed to chalk them up to experience and put most of them aside—but there's one nightmarish incident that he's never been able to forget. It happened on one of Rick's first singing tours, back when he was playing rural fairs The state was in the midwest; the town was a nice, quiet town filled with nice, quiet people out to have a good time. At the midway, on the stage, a show was just starting. The announcer was telling about its two headliners—youngsters from Hollywood headed for stardom and success. "Yes, sir, folks, you can say you heard them when they were just starting," he said, and introduced the first guest—Ricky Nelson. Rick ran onstage, grinned quiveringly, gulped once or twice to drown the butterflies in his stomach, and, accompanied by his trusty guitar, began to sing. And then an awful thing happened. Someone in the audience started to boo, somebody else picked up the cry, and Ricky, his face a white mask of horror, was unceremoniously challenged to quit the stage. Unable to quiet them, to start again, Ricky finally ran, and the other newcomer—Molly Bee—had to fill in for the rest of the show. Next day, when the reviews came out, Rick still felt like running. They all read somewhat the same: "What does Hollywood think we are, some hick town where it can send all the no-talent teen-agers it doesn't know what to do with? We sure got a taste of it at yesterday's fair." For one sick moment, Rick wanted to give it all up. For one nightmarish minute he thought of canceling his upcoming appearances and going back to just being one of the Nelsons on TV. But then he took a deep breath and gathered up all his courage and went on—to prove that an audience, and even critics, sometimes can be wrong.



HE SUFFERS THROUGH

"A TEEN-AGER'S ROMANCES"



the girls and can't have

Marilyn *is "all right," says Rick, with the connoisseur's studied understatement.*

he wants—

Jayne *typifies Rick's current mood; as he says, "I like girls who are pretty* all over."

■ Older-brother David Nelson claims that Rick is the only guy he knows who can go steady with five girls at once. Even allowing for brotherly exaggeration, it's got to be faced: Rick is a lady-killer, a heartbreaker, the kind of man who just needs to flutter an eyelash to start feminine hearts thumping. Sure, he seems shy and retiring. But there's something about those big blue eyes and that fringe of eyelashes, the unruly hair that won't stay down, the crooked grin that's unbeatable and unforgettable. One would say, seeing Rick in action during personal appearances, when he's signing autographs, or even when he's chatting casually with a girl, that all this guy would have to do is whistle—and he'd be deluged with girls. It wasn't any wonder that almost as soon as Rick became extra-big news, shortly after he made his first recording, almost every interviewer in Hollywood asked him to describe his ideal girl. Pencils in hand—they waited breathlessly, knowing that all over America, girls were waiting to hear his description—so they could run out and have themselves made over into his pattern for the Ideal Girl, ready to fling themselves at Rick's feet.

It's hard to imagine what the interviewers expected—but it certainly wasn't the description that came from Rick. For without batting an eye, he described Jayne Mansfield and Marilyn Monroe as his idea of "all right." Now these are undeniably gorgeous creatures—but Jayne has Mickey and Marilyn has Arthur—Ricky was seventeen years old—and oh well, the whole thing was preposterous!

Maybe—just maybe—Rick had his tongue a little in cheek when he named Jayne and Marilyn. A professional since he was eight years old, and surrounded by professionals since birth, Rick has developed a shrewdness about what *not* to say in interviews. Possibly he figured that since both Jayne and Marilyn were well beyond his reach, nobody would take him seriously, and he could keep his real thoughts about girls to himself. But as he talked about the voluptuous kind of girl that Jayne and Marilyn represent, he said, "I like girls not too fat, and not too talky." Then he added, "I like older women; they make you feel more at ease."

Not too fat, not too talky, the kind of girl who makes you feel at ease. Does this sound like a description of a sex-symbol, a glamorous, out-of-this world creature? Not at all—it sounds as though Rick's tongue was taken out of his cheek, and he was being honest and straightforward about his girl-likes. Now eighteen, maybe Rick looks like a ladies' man, but he's still young enough to feel ill-at-ease on a first date, young enough to be grateful for the kind of girl who will allow an easy, give-and-take relationship.

It's worth thinking about these girls Rick says he wants—and can't have—if you want to really know him. It makes you think about a boy who's still young enough to be scared about girls, young enough to dream about a pin-up, young enough to want a dream more than the real thing.

Marianne Gaba *was his "best date".*

Rosemary Ace *gave Rick "first kiss" on TV.*

Joan Garris *loved Rick's voice.*

Ricki Pond *was a favorite partner.*

Diane Crawford *met Rick on Nelson show.*

the girls he has and can't love

■ When Rick was about eight years old, he escorted a girl named Linda Hussey to a party. That was the beginning—Linda was the first in the long line of Ricky's girls. In the past twelve months alone he's been mentioned with Barbara Hoff, Yvonne Lime, Marianne Gaba, Cheryl Crane, Joan Garris—and photographed with Gail Land, Myrna Fahey, Nancy Young, Carol Morris, Mary Castle, Kathleen Gallant —not to mention the others pictured here.

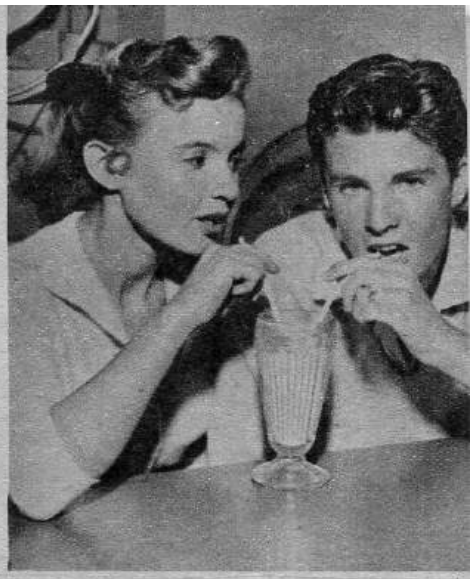
It's an impressive count, but what does it mean? That Rick is a hopeless flirt who can't make up his mind, that he's careless about lovin' 'em and leavin' 'em? That he's a wild boy with a delinquent streak?

Nonsense. It means several things—first that Ozzie and Harriet don't want their son going off the deep end over the wrong girl—so they like to have him surrounded by lots of *right* ones. That they keep the door open to all the girls Rick meets—fans, actresses, high school girls—so that their boy will bring home his dates to meet them, as he always has. It means also that Rick is having a ball—made up of dancing and swimming and hamburgers and movies with the dozens of girls who've laughed with him, shared his moods and his singing, his love of cars and drums and tennis and people. They make him feel young and good and happy. But not love.

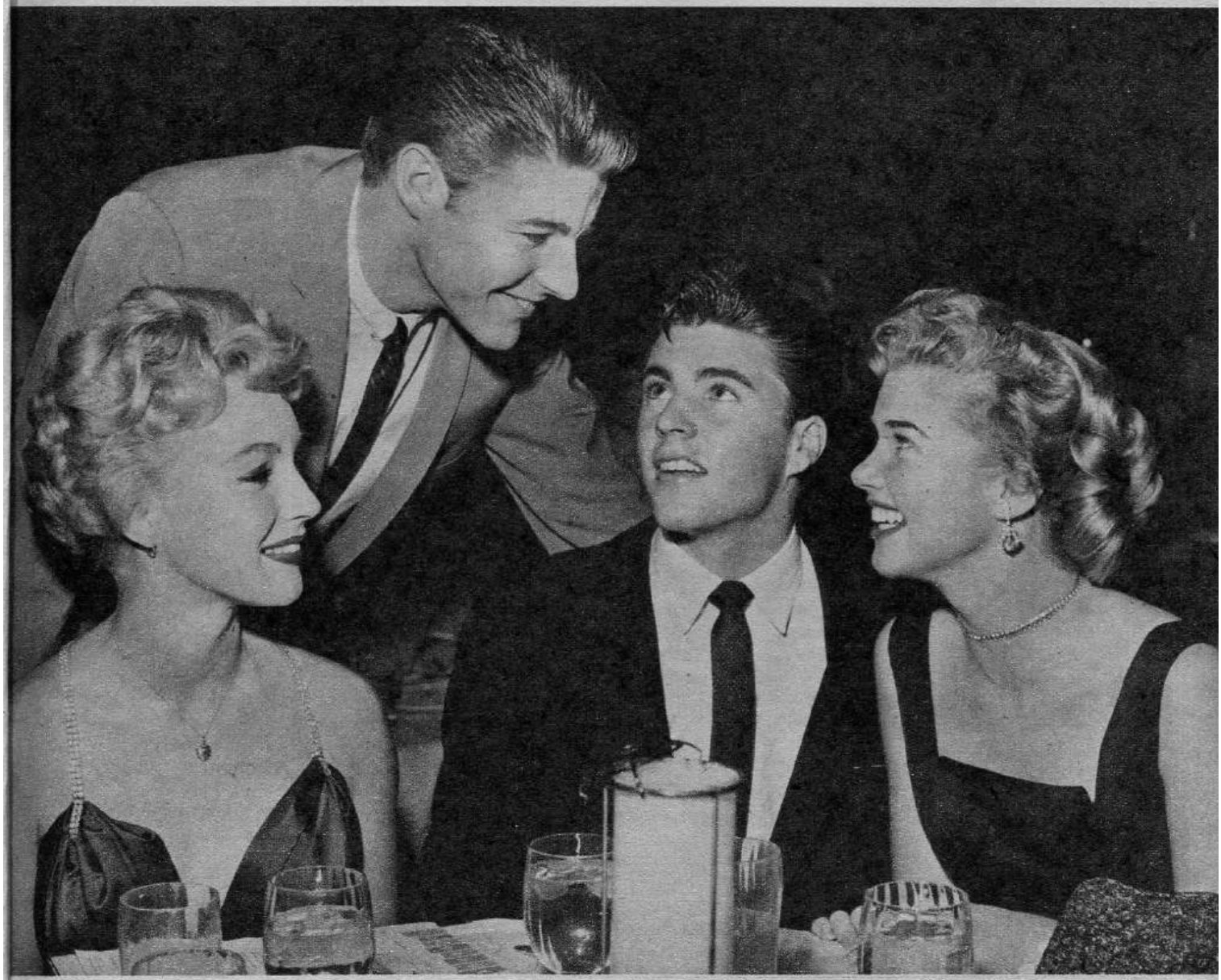
Why not that? Perhaps because so many of Rick's dates have been actresses, who have their own careers to think about, and as little time for serious romance as Rick. Perhaps because some of them *were* "too talky," or wouldn't take it casually when Rick would call at six for a date at seven. Some of them turned out to prefer night clubs to drive-ins—a sure way to lose Rick. Others, the "older" girls he admires, made cracks about teen-agers, not knowing how passionately Rick will defend his generation. Whatever their faults, love didn't come up for a long time. Not until Rick began dating a girl named Lorrie. . . .

Eva Anders *went bowling with him.*

Louanna Gardner *taught him to tango.*

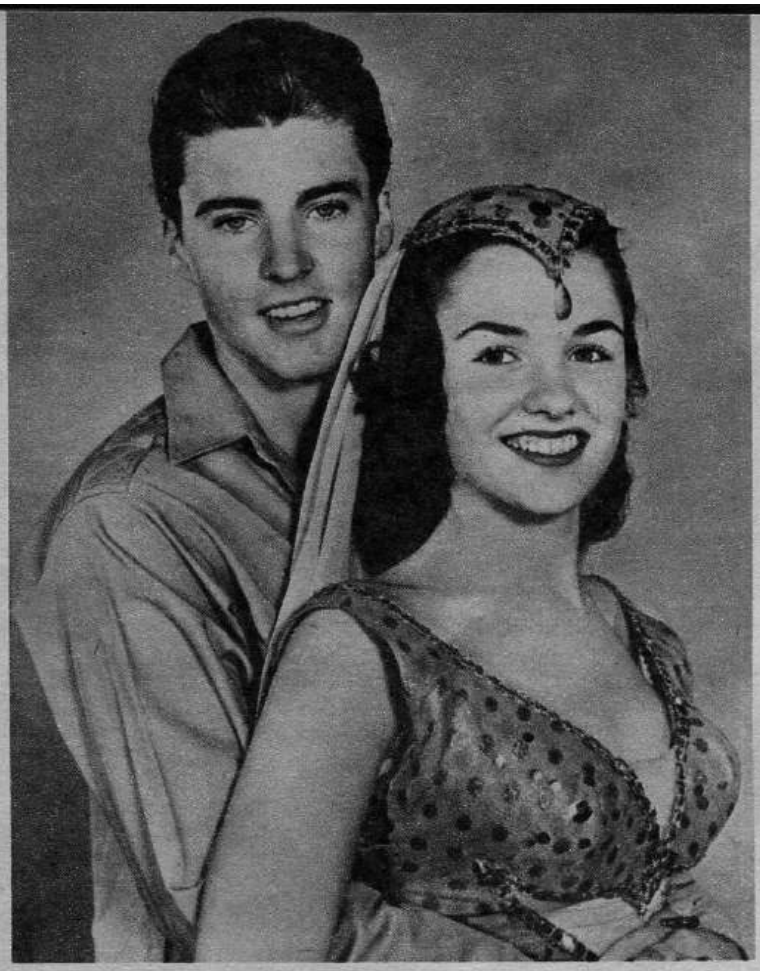


Elaine Dupont *was a frequent date.*



Venetia Stevenson *used to date Dave while Rick dated Yvonne Lime (right). Venetia switched to Rick without Dave minding.*

the girl he loved —and couldn't marry



Lorrie, *pretty and talented, appeared on the Nelson show while dating Rick—won his folks' approval as a date—but was, they felt, too young to get engaged.*

■ You can date every girl in Hollywood—and Rick's come close; you can be careless with girls' hearts because they don't touch yours; you can sigh over Jayne Mansfield and Marilyn Monroe in absentia. And then suddenly you see a girl you can't be careless about—a girl who makes you care.

For Rick Nelson, this girl was Lorrie Collins. He saw her just once on a local TV show and phoned for a date that night. Lorrie was thrilled, but she *had* a date. When she got home that night, Rick's car was parked in the driveway, and Rick himself was parked in the living room, making friends with Lorrie's mom. From that night on, it was Rick and Lorrie everywhere. They went for drives and to movies and to the Nelson house; the mood was mostly fun and light and gay. But from time to time, the mood would change. Rick's heart would beat faster, and he'd find himself tongue-tied. On those occasions he didn't feel like a kid about a girl. He felt like a man in love.

Why with Lorrie, only sixteen, cute but not beautiful? Maybe because they were so much alike. Lorrie, like Rick, had been in show business since she was a child. Her family had had it rough, far rougher than the lucky Nelsons, but they had the same warmth. Lorrie loved music—she was doing a rock and roll act with her brother Larry when Rick met her—and she understood when Rick worried about his singing. She took his career seriously, was proud with understanding instead of hero-worship.

So for a while things were very good. Rick and Lorrie wrote a song together, "My Gal." He called her constantly when he was away, was with her every moment at home. And he gave her a ring—a replica of the comedy-tragedy masks—to wear.

But Lorrie was only sixteen, Rick only eighteen. Too young by adult standards to know about love or feel it. Who knows how difficult it was for the Collinses to say, "No—this must stop," to their daughter—when they themselves had married in their early teens? Who knows how difficult it was for the Nelsons, who liked Lorrie, to say firmly, "Not yet, Rick"?

Maybe only Lorrie Collins knows how hard. Because she gave back the ring and stayed quietly in high school—a girl without her guy. Maybe only Rick Nelson knows—for he gave up the thought of marrying Lorrie and tucked it into his heart—perhaps as a "someday" thing. Some said he did it because he's still dependent on his family for ready cash, for approval. But we say he did it because he knew they *were* too young, that if he wanted a marriage like his parents', he would have to wait. We say it was the most mature thing Rick has ever done.

he can't get married, so . . . he lives

■ If there's been a lot of talk about Rick and his idols, Rick and his girls—well, there's been twice as much about Rick and his home life. Rumors of every sort have sprung up: Rick and Ozzie aren't talking to each other, Rick can't get along with David any more, Rick's leaving home, leaving the show, making more money than his father. You name it, it's been rumored. And it could be an awkward situation. Whether or not he makes more than Ozzie and Harriet, Rick does make a lot more money than the average fellow who gets told when to come home at night and what time to go out again. In a household that has been as close and as warm as the Nelsons', a break could be a major tragedy for everyone involved. Actually, by means of compromises and adjustments on all levels, the Nelsons are making a good thing instead of a calamity out of their youngest's sudden swoop to stardom. "I'd like to stress," Rick explains, "that I consider myself more fortunate than many other fellows my age because I spend so much time with my family and they've made such a special effort to understand me. When I come home my folks never give me the third degree about where I've been and what I've done. I tell them because I want to, not because I have to. And I don't think they've been particularly strict with Dave and me. They've always realized that though we portray a typical American family, David and I are entitled to certain privileges because we are doing a grown-up's job. This is not just my opinion. I am merely quoting what my mother and father have often said."

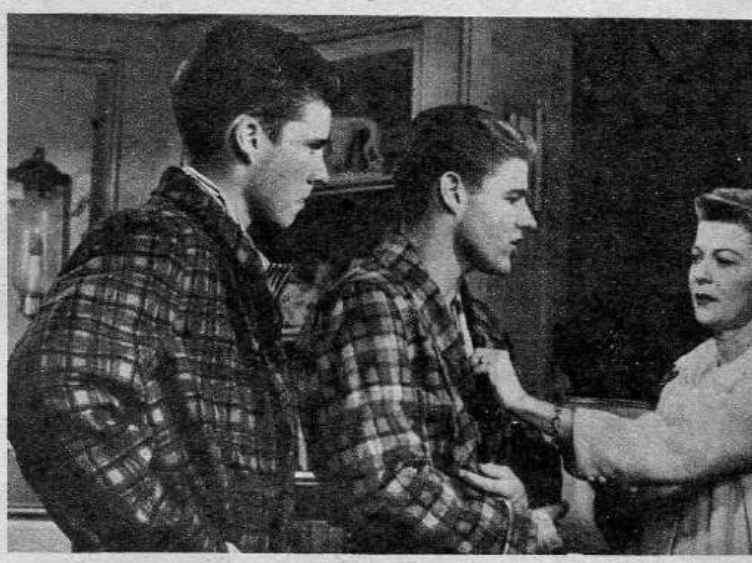
Ozzie believes in "relaxation; it's no good to work too long," but not precisely in "rest." The family helps . . .

at home and likes it

Wise words, those, from parents who realized early that their ties with their sons would have to be those of love and loyalty, rather than economic dependence. Especially wise, because those "extra privileges" must have cost Ozzie a battle with himself; bringing the boys up as "perfectly normal youngsters" has been almost a religion with him. Yet he has been astute enough to know when to give a little on even his most precious ideal. That is not the usual tactic of a man consumed with jealousy of his own son. One magazine has gone so far as to suggest that Ozzie *is* jealous—not of Rick, but of his own youth, gone now, but re-created in Rick's new world of screaming, adoring fans. It's a nice theory; it would be even better if it fit the facts. The truth is that Ozzie can keep up with his sons—and does—at swimming, basketball, football—and in fan mail, too. The only time he's been known to lose was when Rick, flushed with success at having outdrawn John Wayne on location, came home, challenged Ozzie—and beat him, too. Ozzie seems to have survived the disgrace.

Rick's relations with David are even more complex. Not only is Dave close to Rick in age, but after being the older, and therefore the leader, all his life, he is suddenly forced to take a back seat to his younger brother in terms of fan popularity—and sometimes, even in female admiration. Girls such as Venetia Stevenson have been known to start out with David and end up with Rick. It could mean a battle royal, except that it works the other way, too. On one recent evening, Dave encountered Rick on the phone. "Who you talking to?" he demanded. Rick sighed happily, named the girl. "Poor kid," Dave hissed in his ear. "She called me an hour ago. . ." Should that happen when either one of the boys is serious about a girl, it could mean trouble. But it's highly unlikely. Mostly, Dave and Rick go for different types altogether, because they themselves are so different. Which, basically, is the reason they get along so well—and also the reason that there is no jealousy between them despite the talk. The sort of mob-reaction that Rick gets bolsters him up, makes him feel loved—but it has no appeal to Dave, who has more confidence in himself than Rick, doesn't need to prove he's good over and over.

So why, under those circumstances, did Dave leave home? Maybe just because things at home *were* so good—because Ozzie and Harriet have made it so easy for him to grow up, to be a man, to strike out on his own. But neither he nor Rick is thinking of leaving the show; all other commitments, no matter how much more they pay in terms of money and prestige, come second, get sandwiched in between filming the family programs. "We like it that way," Rick says simply. And he means it.



Harriet is always available for troubles, for advice, for making sure her boys dress warmly, get enough sleep.

Both boys treat their mother with more than affection, bring her flowers, praise her clothes, notice new hair-dos.

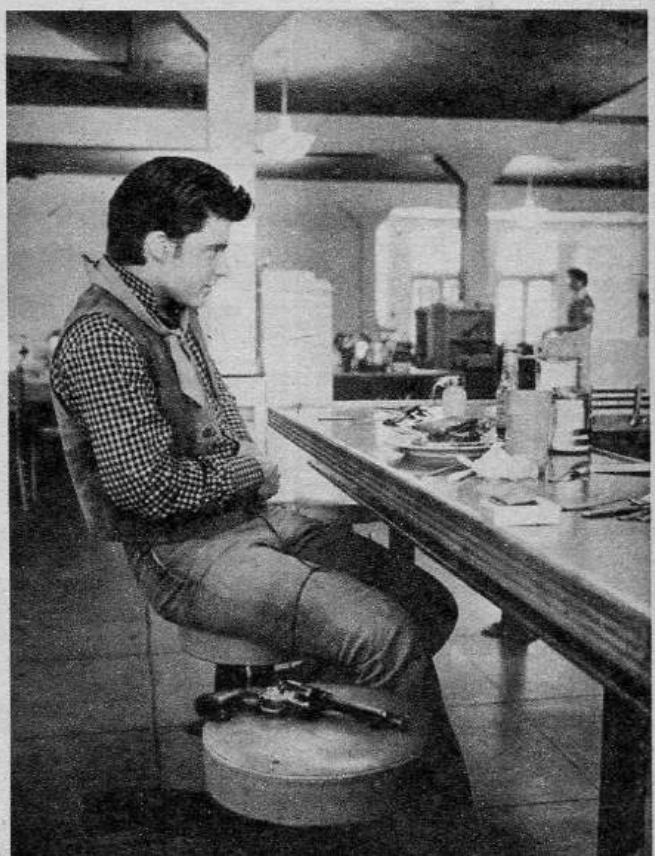
HE LIVES AT HOME AND LIKES IT...

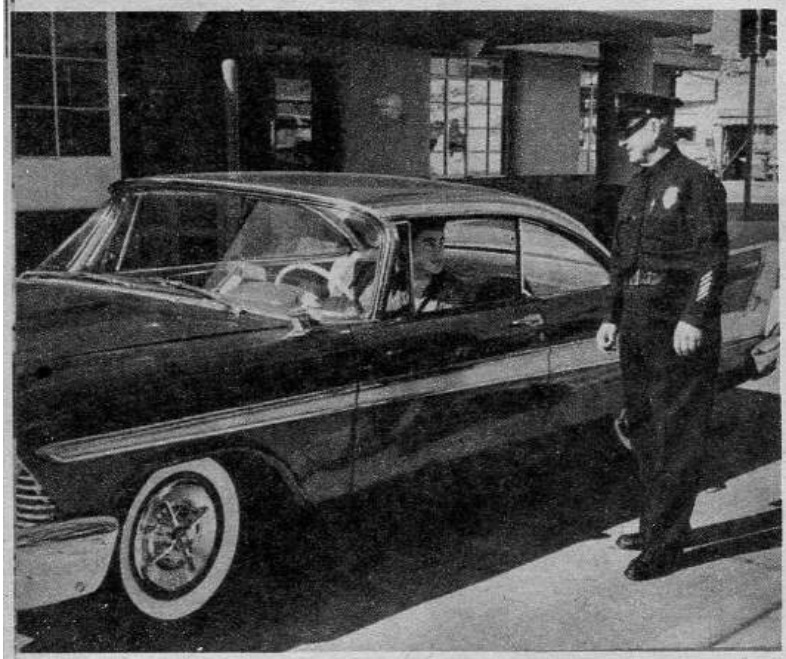
but a fella can't always stay home

■ Being a singer—and now a movie actor—isn't all yelling crowds and exciting new sights. There are bull fights in Mexico and stock car races in Arizona, but lonely stretches of road in between. A guitar and a guy's own low-slung car help ease the loneliness, but on tour there are sometimes three-day layovers in strange towns. Rick is swamped with singing offers for those occasions, but Ozzie has made him promise to rest instead. So he relaxes, alone in a hotel room or in a restaurant, writing letters home or finding folks to talk to—when he can overcome his pesky shyness. Mostly he worries—about his singing, his acting. He remembers the time he was in the preview audience of *Love Me Tender*, Elvis' first picture. "They laughed and jeered—it was awful. What if they do the same to me at *Rio Bravo?*" But under the fear, he's eager to get started on his next movie, *The Wild Country*. His Dad is set to co-star; he won't have to be all alone.

Travel was a family affair when Nelsons went to Europe

Eating alone is so different from huge family meals at home.

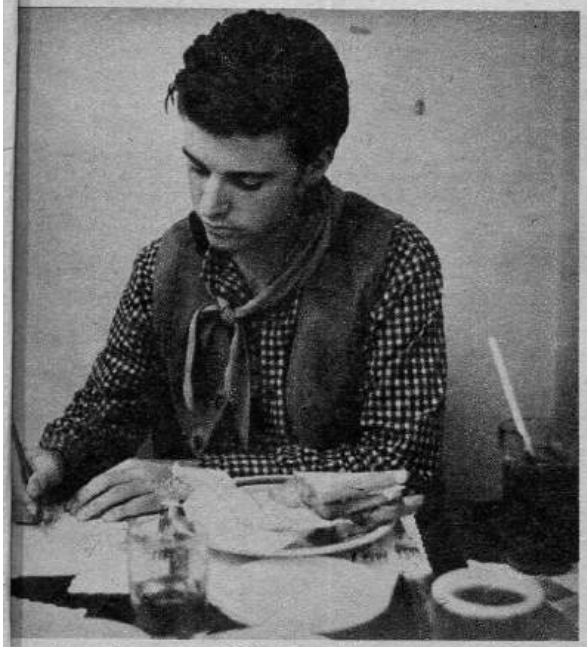




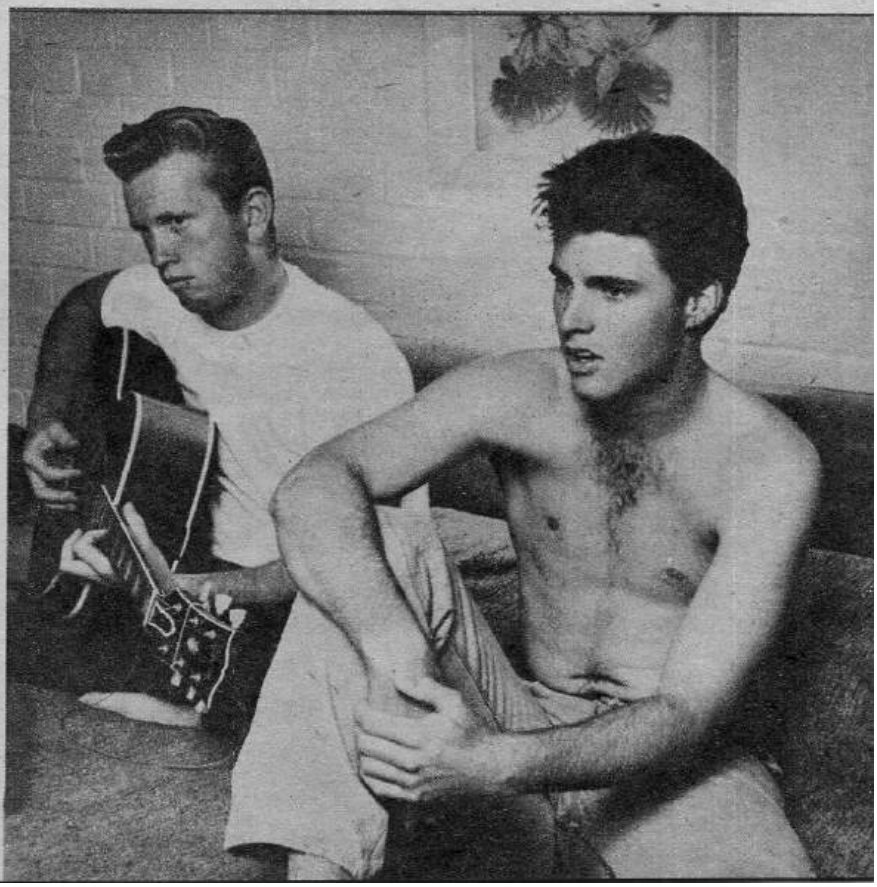
Rick's low-slung hardtop still gets tickets on tour.

. . . but now that Rick's a solo act, he goes with his guitar, his Plymouth Fury (and sometimes a few friends) for company.

When a close pal picks up his guitar and strums → a tune, Rick forgets his loneliness in song.



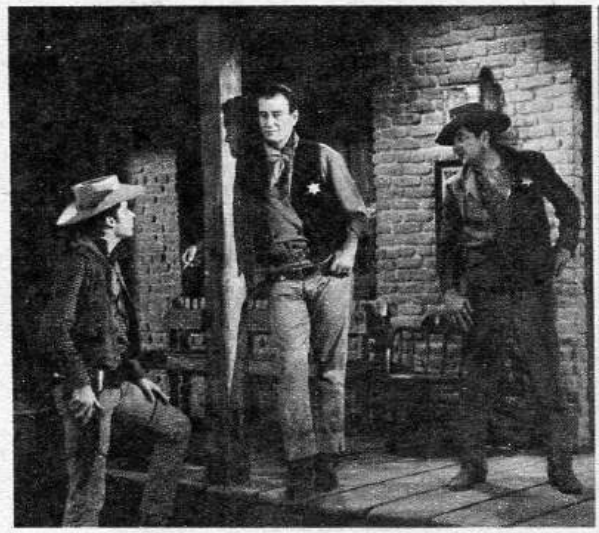
A little homesick, Rick charts his route to send home.



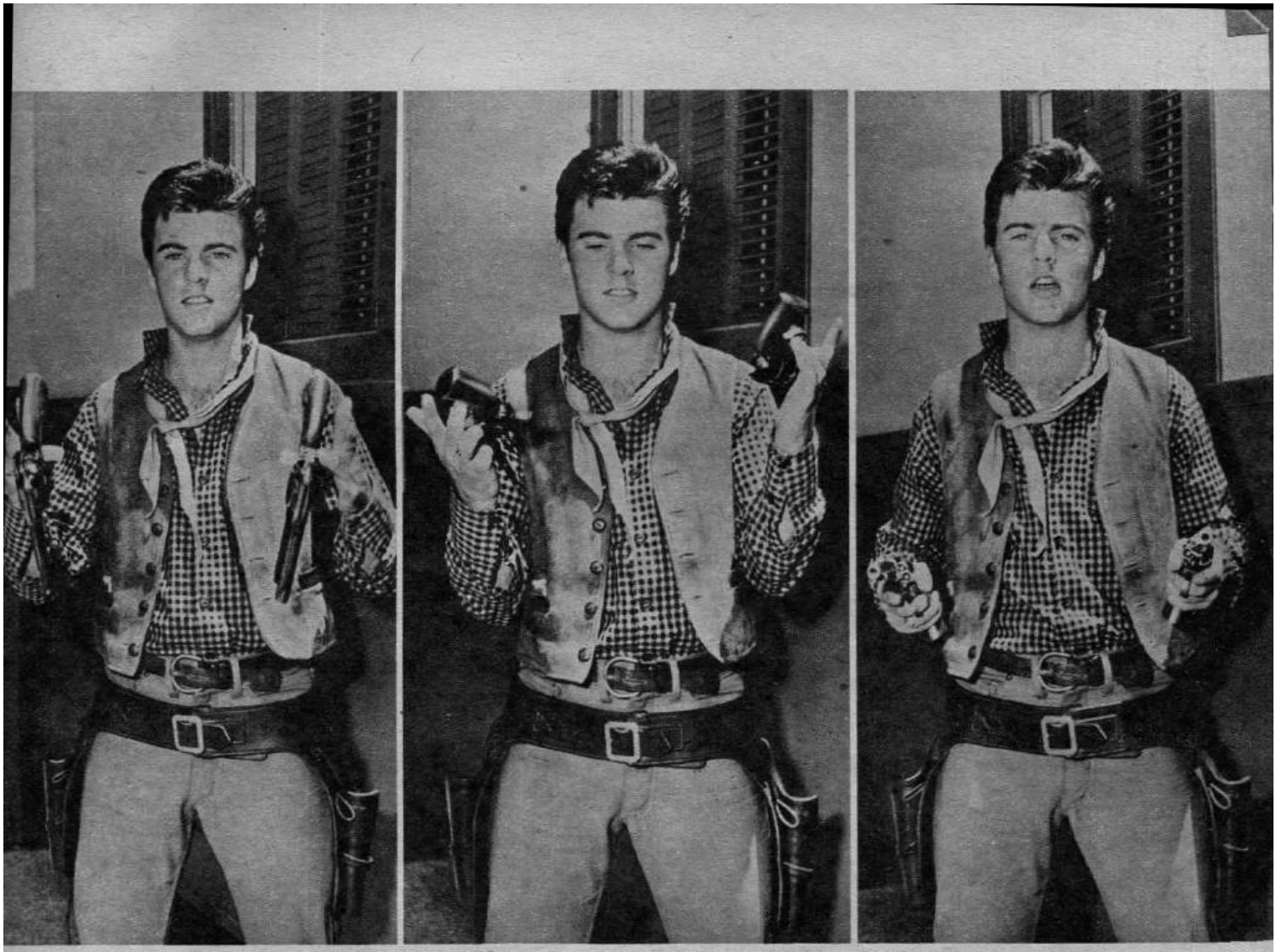
HERE COME THE NELSONS *was Rick's first picture. He was ten, mischievous, and still a blond.*

THE STORY OF THE THREE LOVES *came only two years later, but Rick's hair had already changed to brown.*

he leaves home



RIO BRAVO *is a challenge. It'll either make Rick a movie star overnight—or make him a nervous wreck.*



RICK DEMONSTRATES *the form that convinced John Wayne he didn't need a stand-in for gun-handling.*

to make movies

HERE COME THE NELSONS wasn't much of a challenge for bright young Ricky. It was just like another radio program, only longer. Sure, he had to worry about how he looked as well as knowing his lines, but it wasn't hard. He was asked to do the things he did every day—like heckling David, or playing cowboys and Indians, using Dad for the redskin. It was more fun than work. He would sometimes disappear from the set, and shooting would be held up for hours before he was found talking to a cameraman on the next lot—but those antics were part of his usual mischievousness.

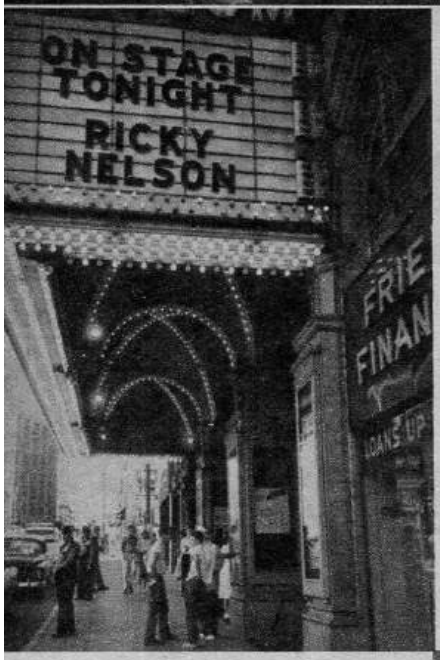
THE STORY OF THREE LOVES starred Ricky with Leslie Caron, Farley Granger and Ethel Barrymore. Rick won the plum role because of all his fan mail after *Here Come the Nelsons*. He played a youngster with a hated governess (Leslie Caron), who wished he was grown up. Miss Barrymore granted the wish and lo and behold! he became Farley Granger. Rick did well, but didn't get another role—he'd lost his little-boy quality.

RIO BRAVO, despite the fact that it co-stars Rick, Dean Martin, (and Sheb Wooley with John Wayne) is not a musical—nor does anybody sing anything in it except Rick, who is slated to do the title tune (a fact which Dean Martin says, jokingly, he's still sore about). It's a rough, tough, old-time Western. In it Rick does a fine job of riding, roping, and handling a gun—all of which he had to learn in no time flat. In fact, Duke Wayne didn't think Rick could ever learn to draw professionally in time for takes, so he hired a stunt-man to stand in for him. Rick got wind of it, ambled onto the set, challenged the Duke, and out-drew the veteran who'd been shooting since before Rick was born. Needless to say, Mr. Wayne sent the stuntman home.

Nelson fans are even wilder than Presley fans—they yell, clap, sing along with Rick. In response, his blue eyes half-close in ecstasy, his lower lip pouts, pushing out the tones; his calloused fingers tremble on the strings of the guitar as he rocks. →

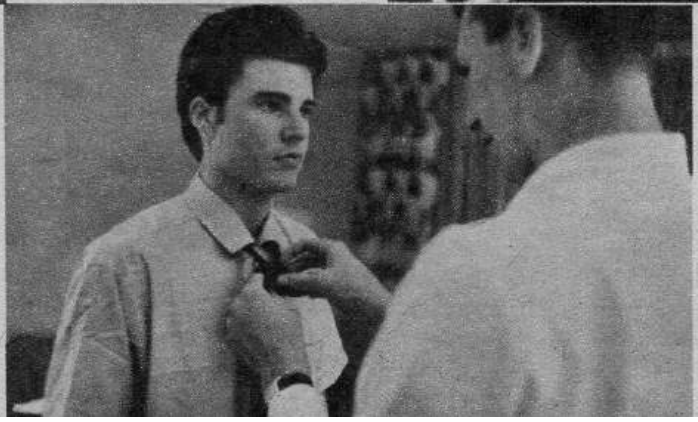
← *Rick flew to Seattle, was met at airport by close to a thousand fans, who watched him leave in a rented convertible. Maury Foladare (seated in front of Rick) is Nelsons' oldest friend as well as agent, always goes with Rick.*

when he leaves home



When Rick climbs on stage and strums his guitar, something happens to him. Free, happy, intoxicated with the music and the response of his fans, he'll sing all night if he's asked to and is convinced by the noise of the crowd that he's really wanted by them. →

↑ *Long before time for Rick's Seattle appearance, police were posted outside Orpheum Theatre to prevent overflow crowd from mobbing Rick or fighting over sold-out seats. Everything remained orderly for the performance; nobody ripped Rick's clothes as sometimes happens.*

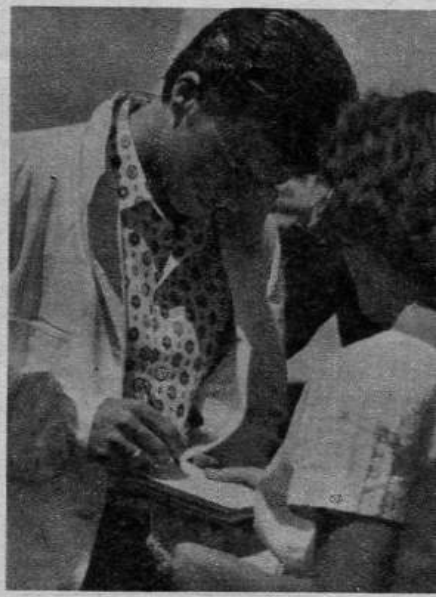


← *Backstage, Rick tries to keep calm, worries over his reception. In Seattle he allowed himself to be talked into a tie—sometimes he sings in sport-shirt or cowboy outfit.*

he starts riots across the country!

■ If there was a riot in your town this summer, probably Rick Nelson was passing through. But the mobs that turn out don't go to his head—maybe because they go so quickly to his heart. Rick lives for the hours before a live audience, watches them as he sings, desperately anxious to *know* they like him. Singing is Rick's deep passion, but also the thing he's most unsure of. Even his successes seem too sudden to be real—except in front of his fans. There, as they yell, he gives his all. On stage he closes his eyes, goes all relaxed, and sings a ballad with everything in him. When he switches to the rock and roll numbers that made him famous he stomps his foot, sways his hips, and lets go with more bounce than Presley. He encores and encores, as the fans yell for more. At the end he limps off stage, dripping perspiration, his shirt soaked and his guitar fingers trembling. But the riotous, loving noise is still in his ears. At the next town on the agenda, mobs are already lined up to buy seats—and when tickets run low, the police have to be called out to stop the riots. Hearing about it, Rick shakes his head nervously. "Boy! What if they don't like me?"

↑*Backstage, Rick autographs copies of a special souvenir book sold at his personal appearances. It costs 50 cents, is jammed with pix.*



↑*After the show, Rick invariably signs many autographs, treats every fan as an honored guest he's glad to see.*

wherever he goes— your heart goes with him

■ No, there's no doubt that Rick Nelson is on the move. But where is he going? Well, *possibly* back to obscurity—or at least comparative obscurity. He could go back to sharing the limelight with his family instead of standing in it alone; he could turn again into Dave's little brother, Ozzie and Harriet's youngest son. There have, after all, been plenty of youngsters who hit the big time—and fell back.

But we don't think Rick Nelson will be one of them. It isn't only because his is a real talent; it's because his singing is not just a gimmick to get attention—it's a love, a passion, a drive. A boy who has that doesn't stop singing. And a singer like Rick can't stop succeeding. The one disaster that haunts him still will never be repeated—and Rick's the only one who still gives it a thought. With time, that will disappear, and in its place will come the one thing Rick doesn't have as yet: confidence. Once he's got that, nothing can stop him. He can, we believe, be another Frank Sinatra—more than a fad singer, a teen-age craze. He can be an artist.

There are other reasons, too, for predicting a bright future. One of the biggest is his past. Rick isn't a boy from nowhere, dropped suddenly into the middle of success, dizzy with money and fame. He's grown up among celebrities and grinding cameras; he knows his way around the top of the world. At the same time he's been blessed with what too many other show business youngsters have never known—a happy, stable home, non-professional friends, the warmest family life in or out of Hollywood. He's blessed with parents who will see him through success or failure, with a brother he loves and trusts. With all that behind him, how could he fail?

Not that we're saying it's all going to be easy. There's Rick's insecurity which can hold him back. It almost kept him from attempting his first big movie; if his reviews fall at all short of what he wants, it could prevent him from trying again. He must come to terms with his fears.

There's his energy, too—that drive never to sit still, to be doing a thousand things at once and doing them all well. If Ozzie didn't insist, Rick never would take a vacation. He'll have to learn to relax, lest he burn himself out.

And, of course, he'll have to get over the blind love for his idols that makes him imitate them too closely, be it for good or for bad. He'll have to be Rick Nelson—and nobody else.

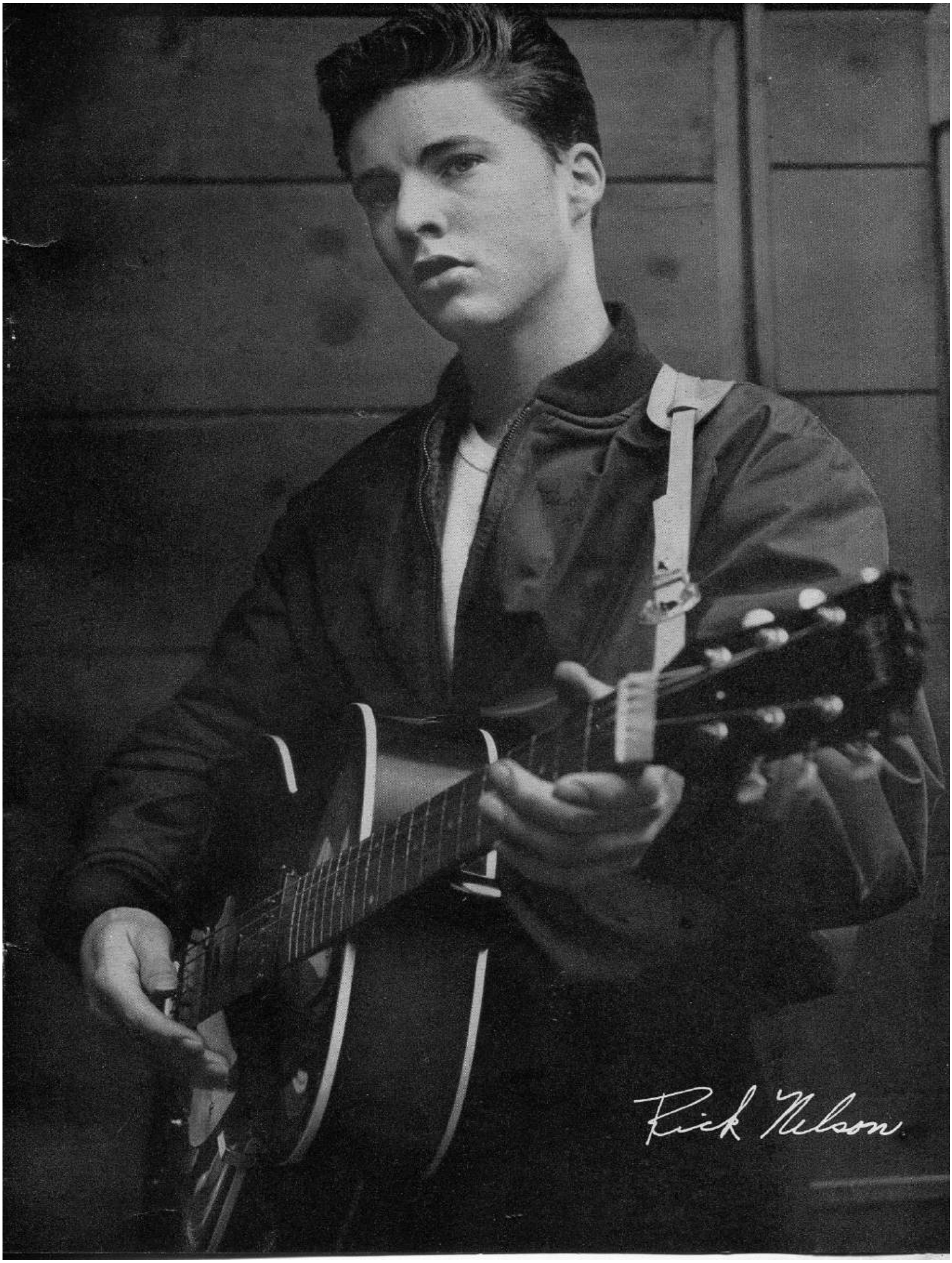
But all those things are comparatively easy. His personal life may be harder to keep happy. He's the only boy at home, now that Dave has turned twenty-one, come into his money and moved into a house of his own. Eventually Rick may want to do the same and find it harder than Dave did. In the first place, Rick's the impulsive one; Dave's the sensible, calm one. It's easier for people to think of Dave as grown-up than it is to realize that Rick is no longer a kid. Also, Rick is the baby age-wise; it's always hard for parents to see their youngest go. But if the Nelsons handle that as well as they have handled the tremendous problem of a son whose sudden fame almost eclipses their own—then they'll come through that crisis all right, too. They'll still be a family, no matter who lives where.

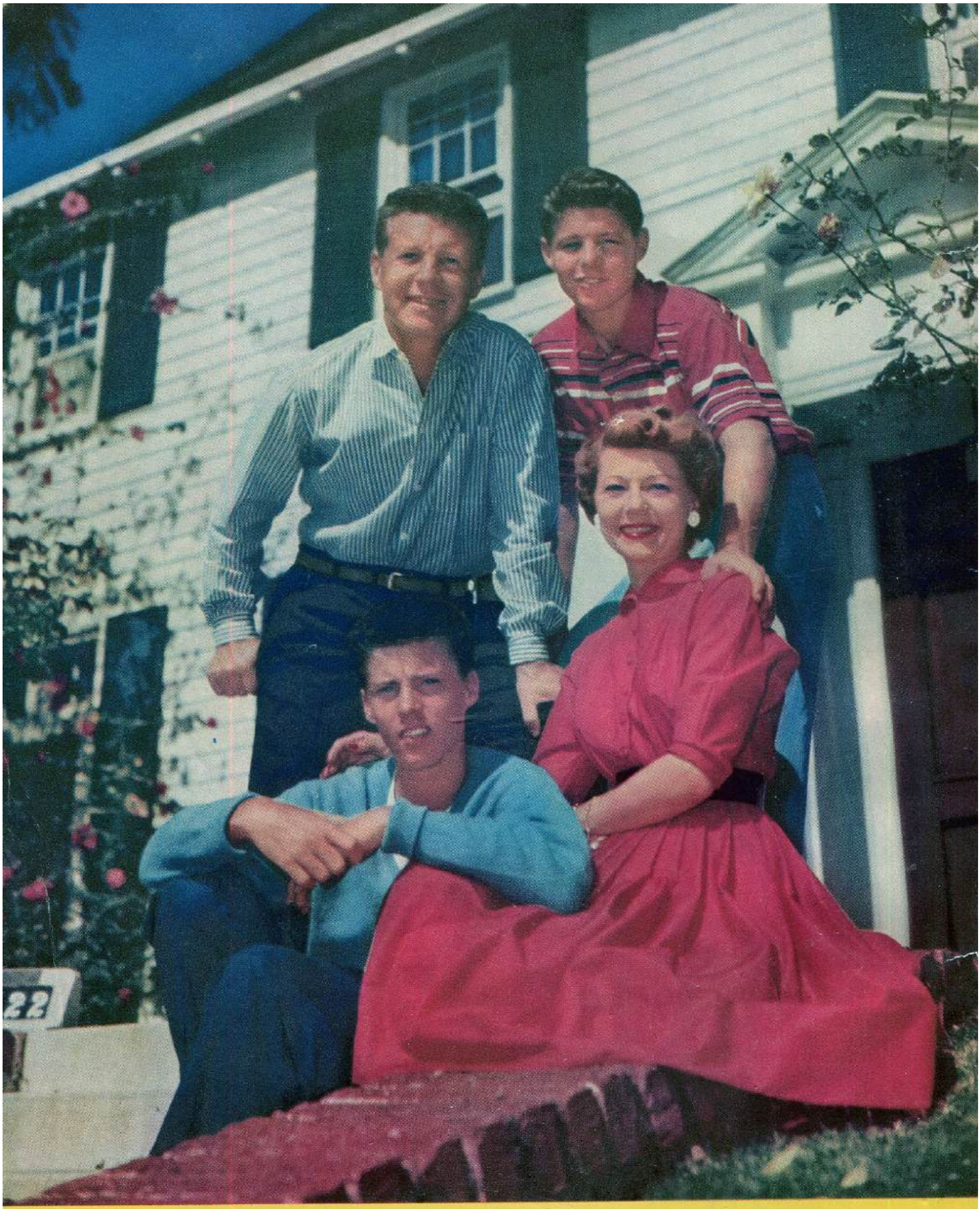
And Rick himself—what kind of a person is he going to become? The best way to answer that is to look at the guy he is today—which is what we've been doing all along in these pages. Hear what he says about himself and about his generation:

"I don't agree that teen-agers are different from adults. To get that, you'd have to group them like they were all alike, which they're not. There are restless, nervous adults and there are phlegmatic, placid teens. Some people are neurotics and some are clods and some are in between. In my opinion age has nothing to do with it. In fact, I don't think teen-agers have as many problems as adults. I know *I* don't. Why, if we were half as bad as we're made out to be sometimes, we'd not only be the lost generation of this century, but of all time. . ."

There speaks a fellow who knows what he's doing. There speaks a guy who's going to be—and soon—a really fine man. There speaks a boy you can't help but love. Anyone still got any questions about where Rick is going? We say it's straight up—and fast!

Today Rick stands at the crossroads of his life. But he seems to know which way he's going. →


Rick Nelson



The fabulous Nelsons, ABC-TV's first family: Ozzie and David, Ricky and Harriet